STORIES SHORT AND STORIES TALL. STORIES FOR ONE AND STORIES FOR ALL.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 420. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 16TH, 1897. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 420.] [ONE PENNY.

EDITED BY

C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

For the Week ending January 16th, 1897.

THE SHADOW OF THE GUILLOTINE.

"ROLAND, they are coming. Hark! I hear the voices, the clatter of the pikes and guns. Oh! Roland, my husband!"

"Hush! Yvonne; be brave."

His wife clung to him, weeping, as he tried to soothe her.

Lights approached the house, and the noise without grew louder till it culminated in a furious knocking at the door below.

"In the name of the Republic!" cried a voice.

Footsteps ascended the stairs, the door was flung open, and the room filled with the fierce, red-capped soldiers of Lebon. One stepped forward. "Citizen Mauricière, you are arrested."

Yvonne gave a cry of agony. At Arras, in the year 2 of the Republic, arrest meant death.

"Courage, dear," whispered Roland. Then aloud, he asked: "What is my crime?"

"Harbouring rebels."

"Or that my father has escaped you?"

"You are an aristocrat."

"I am a Republican."

"You are a *Suspect*."

Roland smiled disdainfully and resigned himself to his fate.

"Then all is said," he replied. "I am ready."

Yvonne clung to him still, but he gently unclasped her hands and kissed her. The soldiers closed round him, and he was gone.

His wife stood dazed. Gone! to the prison; and from the prison to the guillotine was but a short journey that the feet of some condemned traversed every day. Gone! and she was alone. No, not quite alone. Her child, sleeping on a couch by the window, had wakened at the noise of the trampling and the voices, and now began to stir and cry. Yvonne fell on her knees beside him—there was still her boy left to her, to guard and protect.

The little one put his soft hand up to her face, wetting it with the hot tears, and laughed. She clasped him in her arms and covered him with kisses hot and fervent. But the curly head turned away rebelliously and the dimpled hands tried to push away the mother's face. Something else had attracted him. Yvonne looked up to see what had taken his attention, and then suddenly released the child, who slid from the couch and ran tottering across to the centre of the room, where stood a tall, white-haired man clad in the ragged, discoloured dress of a Republican soldier.

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Yvonne shrank back at the sight of the uniform, but the man took the boy in his arms, and, advancing, tenderly drew her to him.

"My poor, poor girl," he said.

"Father!"

"I saw him taken, my child; I came to warn him, but too late."

Yvonne looked round fearfully and pushed the shutters closer.

"They may return," she said. "Are you safe?"

"Yes, for a time, and my life is precious now or I should not be in this dress," he replied bitterly. "Listen, my child, this is no time for tears and sorrowing. We must act if we are to save Roland."

"Save Roland! Can we—can you save——? Oh, it is useless. Do not raise my hopes, father. Can you, of all people, think that Lebon has mercy?"

"He? No. But Robespierre will sell a life for a life. It is I, the Marquis de la Mauricière, they want. I escaped them, so Roland was marked down. He suffers for his father's loyalty; shall his father be less loyal to him than to the cause? My life is useless to the young king; Robespierre will buy it with Roland's freedom."

"Ah, no!"

But the father continued resolutely: "My child, I can trust no one but you, and I must not be taken, for my life is my son's. You must go to Paris, see Robespierre, plead with him. If that fails—denounce me; and when he gives you Roland's pardon, you shall tell him where I am hiding."

"No, no! I cannot betray you; Roland would curse me; my child would learn to loathe me. Do not ask me to do this. See, I am brave and can bear the agony of parting with my husband. He himself will die an honourable man. I shall bring up my child, my little Roland, to reverence him; do not ask him to live in shame, and me to be the betrayer of his father."

The old man's eyes shone with unshed tears, his stern lip trembled, but he drew himself up imperiously.

"I command it," he said. "I am still the head of the family; will you rebel against me, as this *canaille* has rebelled against its King? I alone am answerable for my son's arrest, and if I would save him, will you refuse to do my bidding?"

Yvonne hesitated still. "Do not ask me," she sobbed.

A great tear rolled down the old man's bronzed cheek. Almost pleadingly he stretched out his hand.

"Will you not let me save my son, my Roland? Will you, his wife, not help me? Think, think if this child, your little Roland, were in danger, would *you* not give up your life for him?"

Yvonne involuntarily caught her baby from her father's arms and pressed it to her bosom. The answer was there.

"Then you will go to Paris?"

"Yes," she murmured between her sobs. "May God and Roland forgive me. I will go."

* * * * *

"A woman?"

"A woman, citizen."

Robespierre trembled. He was a coward, and but nine days before Cecile Renault had perished for her attempt on his life. Marat was but one year dead by the knife of Charlotte Corday.

"Her name?" he asked harshly.

"Yvonne Mauricière, from Arras."

"I will see her;" and the Dictator's thin, dry hand was laid on the pistol beside him.

Yvonne, pale and trembling, entered and advanced to the table.

"Back there! Stand back, *citoyenne*. What is your business?"

"Ah, Citizen Robespierre, to plead for a life."

"You are from Arras, a Royalist town. It is useless."

"But Roland, my husband, is not a rebel. He is a good Republican. Hear me, monsieur."

"Eh?"

"Citizen. Hear me; he is guilty of no crime. He merely gave a little bread to a priest, who——"

"Priests! The worst of rebels. It is enough; he feeds the enemies of France—he feeds the guillotine." Robespierre answered with a convulsive smile.

"But is it a crime to be punished with death? Think, citizen, a little bread to a starving man. And we can pay if need be, any fine—anything. Oh! not death!"

"It is decreed."

"Mercy, mercy!"

Robespierre twitched his head impatiently. Yvonne had thrown herself on her knees, and the tears streamed down her cheeks.

"Ah, then it was false," she cried despairingly.

"What was?"

"They told me that you were once merciful and pitiful. That in our very town once you would not sentence even a criminal to death, and now—now——"

"Now it is for France, and these are traitors. Come, come, *citoyenne*, I have no time; the Convention waits."

"No, no, one moment, monsieur—stay. Your heart is a stone; you are ice; you will not give me my husband's liberty—I will buy it then."

"Justice is not bought," croaked the Dictator, folding his hands and pressing one into the other nervously.

"But if I denounce to you an enemy; one you have long sought?"

"His name?"

"The Marquis de la Mauricière."

Robespierre looked at her keenly. The only sign he made was a contraction of the lips and a deeper breath. Before he spoke again, he carefully brushed from the shoulder of his blue coat some powder that had fallen from his hair.

"And your husband's name is Mauricière," he said coldly.

"He is Roland's father."

"Then Lebon did well. These Royalist families must be stamped out."

"But my husband is a Republican."

"Bah! Where is this traitor now?"

"First, my husband's pardon."

Robespierre fixed his eyes upon the table in silence. At length he spoke, and his voice was softened; the Northern dialect sounded as musical as before it had been harsh.

"*Citoyenne*, you are a good patriot. The Republic, stern to rebels, can reward her daughters. You have denounced a traitor; France will give you a life in return. Let but your denunciation be complete. Where is the rebel hiding?"

"His son's pardon first."

"It is granted, *citoyenne*. A patriot of Arras has a double claim on Robespierre. Is he in Arras?"

"Pardon, citizen."

"Eh, speak."

"I would have the order for Roland's release."

"I have given you my word."

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"My husband's life must not depend on a word, Citizen Robespierre."

"Bah! you—well, well, you shall have it."

The Dictator took his pen—that pen that had given the guillotine so many victims. "Thermidor 3th," he murmured, and wrote; then, folding the pardon, he passed it to Yvonne, who thrust it in her dress eagerly.

"Now, *citoyenne*."

She drew forth a slip of paper and handed it to him. Robespierre read, nodding his head.

"You are a good *citoyenne*," he said, "and shall convey the warrant for the rebel's arrest with that for his son's release."

Once more he wrote. "Give me the pardon again," he said, looking up.

Yvonne hesitated, trembling.

"Tut! it is only that you may not destroy the one and carry the other safely."

She gave it to him, and he added a line more to it, placed both documents under cover, and sealed the packet with the seal of the Republic, One and Indivisible.

"If that seal is broken," he cried harshly, "the pardon is useless. Go!"

Heart throbbing, face pale, she left the room without a word, and the Dictator, with a cold, mirthless smile on his face, hurried to his place in the Convention.

* * * * *

The road from Paris to Arras is over a hundred miles of flat country. A test of endurance for a good horseman with relays of horses, but for a woman who had already covered the ground and was almost fainting from fatigue and anxiety, it was a task almost hopeless. But Yvonne rode for her husband's life. In Paris, by the greatest of good fortune, she had purchased a fresh horse; her own was too spent for use without a day's rest, and that rest she dared not make. A horse could go no farther—the woman, half mad with fear, strung to the utmost tension, conquered over-wrought nature and would go on till she reached the goal or till she dropped dead from the saddle.

But it was slow journeying—too slow for the prize at stake—and yet without constant halts, she knew she could not accomplish her task. Three days passed and still she was only at Amiens—reeling in the saddle and but half-conscious. Twice she fell fainting by the roadside, but twice, bruised and cut, she mounted again, desperate, when sense returned.

On—on till she should fall to rise no more. On—on! Twenty miles now, only twenty; and the early morning sun shone through the mist, over the trodden corn and the charred cottages of Picardy. Nature seemed to strive for her. The cold breezes of morning cooled her hot, throbbing forehead. The birds sang of hope, could she have heard their songs through the rushing and ringing noises in her ears. Even the road grew smoother and straighter, till as the mists cleared she saw in the distance—the citadel of Arras. Ten miles more; but, even within sight of the town she sank on the horse's neck—felt everything slipping away from her—her eyes grew heavier and the dull pain behind them greater, till it blinded her. If she should fail almost at the gates!

She heard the rippling of a stream to her right and feebly drew rein. It was her only hope, and she slid from the saddle with a last effort and, crawling to the brook, plunged in. The shock of the sudden coldness revived her, and as she dashed the water over her head, her eyes cleared. It gave her the temporary strength and relief she so needed. If that strength lasted but one hour it mattered not then if death came.

As she climbed to the saddle again, the water dripping from her hair and clothes, she looked back along the white road. A single figure was in sight—a horseman, spurring furiously, feathers and sash flying, the sun-gleam on his scabbard. Yvonne gave a cry and urged her horse to the gallop. There was danger to her in this hurried rider, and she convulsively clutched at the precious paper in her breast, for might not his mission be to delay her and seize the pardon—to prevent it ever reaching Arras?

It was for a life, and mile after mile they raced—the citadel growing bigger and plainer till the houses could be clearly seen, and the crowds gathering in the streets.

The red skeleton of the guillotine; the soldiers; the line of tarr-headed, red-smocked prisoners; the thronging multitude—all come into view as she passes through the gates, and hark! the *Ca Ira!* the death melody with which Lebon ushers his victims into the eternal silence!

She screams and waves the pardon on high. Her voice is powerless and dies in a harsh whisper. One sees her and shouts to the executioner; a yell goes up from the crowd. Lebon, the butcher, deliberately turns his back on her, and waves his sword for the doomed to ascend the scaffold faster. Faster! Oh, God! are there not enough to die! And there, see! Roland, her husband, fourth in the rank, and the great axe rushes down on the neck of the first.

She dashes into the crowd. "A pardon, a pardon!" Lebon takes it with a scowl, but Yvonne sees only the upturned face of her beloved.

The seal is broken; one glance, and Lebon gives to a soldier the warrant for the arrest. He looks at the other paper and suddenly his face clears, and he laughs a fierce laugh. "Proceed," he cries to the executioner, and throws the pardon back; "it is unsigned."

With an awful look of horror on her face Yvonne sees the truth. Her sufferings, her hopes, her almost superhuman toils have been in vain, and she falls into the outstretched arms of a citizen.

The crowd mutters; the *Ca Ira!* rises triumphantly. The axe grates and falls with a thud. Another head for the basket! Thud! Roland steps upon the planks, and with a look of anguish, turns to take a last farewell of his wife.

Another clatter of hoofs, and another rider—his feathers and sash fluttering.

"Stop," he cries between his laboured breaths. "Stop, in the name of the Convention. Robespierre is dead!"

Silence; and then a shout of joy from the multitude. France is tired of blood.

"'Tis false," shouts Lebon furiously. "Mount there—mount the ladder. *Scélérat!* on with the work. The drums, strike up; the drums!"

"It is true. Robespierre, St. Just, Couthon, Henriot—their heads are under the guillotine."

A cry of ferocious joy—a terrible cry—arises from the crowd and Lebon turns pale and wavers.

His power is gone, and even under his eyes the citizens, rushing to the prisoners, set them free and bear them off in triumph.

The Reign of Terror is over.

WALTER ROTHWELL.

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THE ✣ THREE ✣ MURDERS.

I.

WITH their bundles of linen on their heads or under their arms, their wooden shoes clattering against the broken stones on the road, beneath the soft rays of the rising sun, the women were going to the washing-ground, in groups of five or six, chatting light-heartedly, or singing as they passed by the last houses of the village of Kersaint.

The oldest woman, little and thin, with grey hair under her white head-dress, her eyes brightly sparkling from a face which bore traces of the ravages of the wind and sea, cried: "What chatterboxes! We will see presently whether you work as hard with your hands as you do with your tongues."

Still laughing, one of the young girls retorted, a malicious smile curling the corners of her mouth:

"Ah! Aunt Naïe, we will do as much as your daughter, who has not even come with us."

A ponderous-looking woman with a heavy jaw interjected: "She is, of course, still asleep, your daughter Haude, frightened of spoiling her fair complexion!"

But the old woman replied:

"If you only knew! The poor child was up and at work before any of you, seeing that every morning she has first of all to take the milk to M. Gurguy, and as you know, she goes straight from there to the stream where we shall find her."

The girl who had spoken before exclaimed:

"As for the poor lonely gentleman who came, nearly a year ago, to live among the ruins of the castle like the owls, I have ceased to wonder about him. Probably he has had a visitation. He makes me frightened! Whenever I meet him I cross myself and say a 'pater' or an 'ave,' it is more prudent!"

Naïe shrugged her shoulders.

"Idle gossip! Visitation indeed! There is more sense in him alone than in all of you put together, I can tell you. A good and brave young man, and not at all proud, as more than one of the fishermen at Port Sall knows well. Did he not relieve the orphans and widow of Baptiste Sauter who was drowned this winter? If he has no friend in his own class it is because he prefers people like us. This is nothing to what my husband, Jean-Marie Le Floc'h, says of him. He declares there is no one more learned in the world than M. Gurguy. He is always with his books and his writing, taking notes and describing lots of things one sees in the stones which show what happened in our country long ago."

"Why does he bury himself like a beast in this nest of adders of Trémayan, and not live as everyone else in the town of Kersaint like a Christian?" interrupted one of the washerwomen. Her neighbour added:

"I should die of fright among those old stones which can scarcely hold together, and which are certainly visited at night by evil spirits which one feels but cannot see. I shiver at the mere thought of it! Good heavens! If he is not their friend it is a wonder he is not frightened out of his wits exposing himself to these uncanny visitations!"

The old woman smiled, shaking her head.

"He is no more afraid of the invisible than the visible. You only need to see him out at sea in a great storm to understand that he is as courageous as any of our own men. I wager that to-day, in spite of this north-westerly gale, he is out with Le Floc'h to help him haul in the nets and tighten the ropes."

She glanced along the shore on which, as far as one could see, the foam of the waves shone white under the slanting rays of the sun, while one heard the regular booming of the big rollers dashing themselves against the rocks which are to be found along the extreme north-west coast of France, where the Channel meets the ocean.

Having passed the last house in the village, the women, turning to the right, took the road with a high bank at one side, leading to the sandy shore and skirting the forest which rises in front of the ancient fortification of the old feudal Castle of Trémayan. A large flock of ravens passed squalling above the women, looking downwards and disappearing behind the turning of the road.

"The breath of Death, which I thought I felt myself," exclaimed one young girl, throwing herself backwards with such a movement that the whole group for a moment stood still.

Naïe asked uneasily:

"None of them pecked you, Marie Anne?"

"Oh, no, thank goodness!" replied the young girl. She made at the same time an instinctive and protecting sign of the cross, for she knew the Breton superstition that anyone struck by the beak of a raven will die shortly.

Looking at the square keep of the castle, of which the imposing mass with its granite walls, in the thickness of which was the winding staircase forming the means of communication between the four storeys, rose towering above the general ruin of the other parts, another exclaimed:

"Look! I have never seen so many. What is the matter? Why are they so excited? And see, see, these are going in the same direction as the others."

The whole stretch of blue sky around the washerwomen was dotted with them, and their sinister "Crou, crou, crou," drowned the sound of the waves.

After a moment's hesitation and alarm the group of women continued their way on the words of Naïe Le Floc'h:

"It will not do to let these birds of ill-omen prevent us going to our work. Haude will make us all ashamed of being so late."

She listened for a moment at the side of the stream. Then running to catch up the others, she exclaimed:

"I believe I can hear her at work, if I am not deceived by all this noise."

They had begun to sing again when the youngest and gayest of the party, who was walking a little in front, turned to look at her companions:

"I can see Haude, she is already there by the stream, but if you think she stops her work—Ha! ha! ha!"

The others came forward confusedly, curious, and Naïe grumbled:

"What! What does she say, this impudent girl?"

The girl replied:

"She is lying full length in the long grass, asleep! Ah, well! one may be sure she has to make up for

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rising so much earlier than we did. But she does not seem to be disturbed by the noise the ravens are making just above her."

At some little distance one could see the stream in its bed of reeds and rustling grasses, making a patch of blue in the midst of the last green which still resisted the mellowing touch of autumn. Quite close to the washing-ground the form of a woman lay outstretched.

The old woman muttered, hastening her steps:

"Is it possible? Such a good girl usually! I must go to her!"

But one of the young girls, surprised that Haude was not awakened by their approach and the noise of the birds, faltered:

"Perhaps something is the matter. She may be ill."

Secretly uneasy Naïe demanded:

"Ill! What do you mean?"

She called:

"Haude! Haude!"

The large flock of ravens, disturbed by the sudden invasion, continued to circle overhead, and to chatter even more loudly than ever; and as the old woman hurried towards the stream, three or four were flying nearly at her feet between the tall grasses bending over the water.

A large flock of ravens passed above the women.

She uttered an agonised cry.

"*Mon Dieu!* My daughter! What is the matter with her?"

The others had hastened up to her, and the girl who a moment ago was chaffing, now terrified, pointed to the young girl's heart.

"Blood!"

Louder than the breaking of the sea on the sandy shore, wilder than the dismal cawing of the birds of ill-omen hovering in the air, a terrible lamentation arose, echoing and re-echoing amongst the old crumbling walls, and filling the valley with sounds of woe.

"Lord! Lord! They have killed my child, my daughter, my beloved treasure. Dead! Dead! Haude, my dearie. Oh!"

Kneeling in the damp grass, Naïe Le Floc'h tried to raise between her shrivelled hands the limp head with the cold, blue lips, pale, dim eyes, and dishevelled hair half hidden under the trembling reeds.

The wound in the throat was so deep that the head was nearly severed from the body, and there was no hope of restoring life. She lay stretched out a little on the right side, her arms thrown out in front of her. A bundle of linen lay at a little distance, as if the poor girl had been surprised as she was preparing to wash and, throwing her bundle down, had tried to escape.

Terrified, the women did not dare to stir, pressing round their dead friend, finding no words of consolation for the mother whose broken-hearted weeping rose and fell to the accompaniment of the roaring waves, and the sepulchral chorus of ravens.

II.

IN the autumn of the preceding year, when the tourists and bathers were leaving the country one after another, an antiquated old cab with its decrepit driver drove up to "la Grande Maison," the only hostelry in Plondalmezéau, a town to the north of Brest.

The solitary traveller who alighted from this venerable vehicle, at least a hundred years old, a tall, pale young man, with black hair, took a room on the second floor of the hotel, announcing that he had come to explore the surrounding country, and wrote his name in the visitors' book as M. Gurguy.

He talked little, never received letters or visitors, only showing himself at meal times, when he displayed most abstemious and sober habits. He never joined in the ordinary conversation of the visitors at the *table d'hôte*, but was for ever seeking information about the curiosities and antiquities of that and the neighbouring cantons.

Always driven by the same old coachman, he visited successively all the picturesque and interesting places for miles round, looking for some traces of the famous capital of a colony of the Ossisonicus, the legendary

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Tolente. It was in vain, no vestige showed itself to indicate the site of the maritime city, pillaged and destroyed, we are told, by the Normans more than a thousand years ago.

He rambled over heaths, fields, and beaches, searching for those mysterious stones in which the country abounds, and which refuse so obstinately to tell their secret to the wise.

Nothing that he saw seemed to satisfy his curiosity, till suddenly, after an excursion to the coast of Port Sall and Kersaint, he returned completely transformed, with a radiant look in his eyes, and announced his definite departure on the morrow.

At an early hour he left in his usual cab with his luggage, taking the road to Port Sall—Kersaint.

At the Maison Blanche, where the roads branch off, he left the road to Port Sall on his right, climbing the little hill to Kersaint, which he drove through without stopping, and went direct to the ruined Castle of Trémayan.

To the astonishment of his coachman and the peasants, who, out of curiosity, had come from the neighbouring cottages, he had his bags carried to the ruined keep, and showed every intention of making his abode there, installing himself in a small hollow more like the nest of an owl than the dwelling of a human being.

With the assistance of the workman and the help of beams and planks he made his room habitable. His only furniture consisted of an iron bed, a table of white wood, some chairs, and a few table utensils. The opening towards the sea he could close with a shutter when he desired. He arranged for a neighbour to prepare his meals and look after his primitive household.

At first all the village was alarmed at this odd fancy, then, little by little, as the newcomer wronged or harmed nobody, the first surprise passed away, and they became accustomed to see him going and coming, usually silent, sometimes questioning one and another in the Breton language, which he knew very well, always absorbed in the customs, the legends, and the antiquities of the place.

He began to make friends with the fishermen of Port Sall, showing an ardent passion for the sea, venturing far by himself on the dangerous and troubled waters in a boat he had bought.

It was on the occasion of buying this boat that he got to know Jean-Marie Le Floc'h, and he soon began to look for him in preference to the other sailors.

One morning, not finding the fisherman at the usual rendezvous, and learning that he was laid up at home in his cottage at Kersaint, he went there to see if he could help him.

The door was opened by a young girl with fair hair and blue eyes, who appeared to be much astonished.

"Who are you?" he asked with interest.

A gruff, loud voice answered from within:

"It is my daughter, M. Gurguy, the only one left to us, Haude Le Floc'h, at your service."

And the fisherman, lying on his bed, continued groaning:

"This confounded rheumatism has laid me up on my beam ends, completely shipwrecked. Oh! ah! The chills one takes in our miserable calling to be sure!"

But the visitor only looked at the young girl, repeating: "Haude."

A voice explained from behind him:

"Haude is her Christian name, after St. Haude, whose tomb was formerly in our church at Laudunvez."

Just then Naïe Le Floc'h came upon the scene, dragging a cow at the end of a rope, and examining with curiosity the stranger of whom her husband had so often spoken, but whom she did not know.

She offered him a glass of new milk, and as, after drinking it, he complimented her on its richness, she proposed to send him some every morning by her daughter. The young man accepted the offer and went away musing, saying to himself under his breath the strangely charming name:

"Haude."

III.

AFTER this it was the custom of the Le Floc'hs to send their daughter every morning with the milk for the breakfast of the dweller in the castle.

However early she came, the young girl always found Gurguy seated before his table, covered with books and papers, working.

He would greet her cheerfully.

"Good-morning, little Haude."

And she would go away with a song on her lips as light-heartedly as a lark.

When she became accustomed to him she would talk to him. Very much surprised by his enthusiastic study of books and by his idea of living in such a weird place, one day she summoned up her courage to say: "Do you know that I need a great deal of courage to come here when the sun has scarcely risen? None of the country people would come a step."

"Why?" he asked.

She exclaimed:

"Why! Good heavens, the very name of this castle is cursed."

"The name?"

"Certainly. Trémayan means three murders."

This morning the merry face of Gurguy had suddenly changed, and he now said, frowning:

"Three murders! What nonsense!"

Haude insisted in a dull and trembling voice, as if she were afraid of arousing the ghosts of the slain:

"There were, we are told, many others, and if the ravens could only speak they could tell——"

She dared not finish.

He seemed so strange; his eyes had an odd light in them. Passing his hand across his forehead, then scattering his papers all over the table, he said nervously:

"Three murders! There was that of the daughter of Galon, then that of the steward killed by his master. Two, only two! The books, the stones, the ruins, nothing tell of more. But there must be reason for the name! There must be——"

He clenched his fists, a strange fury seemed to possess him, he added quickly:

"What folly! Go, go, leave me to my work!"

Already he had resumed his seat by the table, and was devouring with his eyes the pile of books and papers heaped up under his hands.

Haude went away, frightened a little at these words she did not understand, but she dared not tell the people anything of this little incident, and continued to take the milk regularly.

Meanwhile she saw what no one else noticed, that his temper, at first sweet and equable, became day by day more melancholy and sad, and that he became more absorbed in his studies, as if carried away by gloomy preoccupation. His cheerful "good-day" had now a mournful intonation.

He had never renewed the conversation on the dismal

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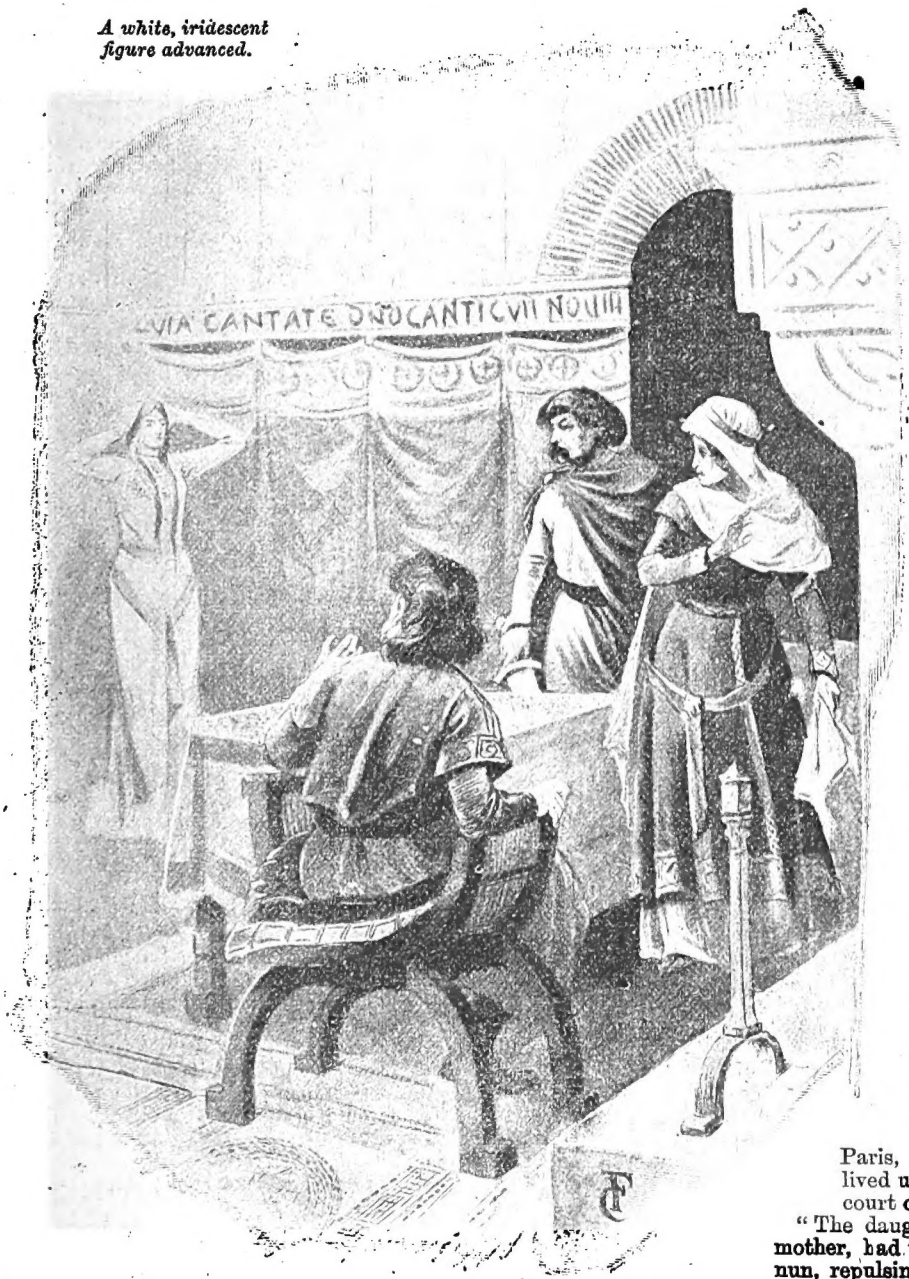

A white, iridescent figure advanced.

name of the old feudal mansion, but from his looks at times, and in his irritation of manner, the young girl understood that he was constantly thinking of it, and that it worried and haunted him.

Thus one day as she was leaving he asked:

"Do you know what happened in this castle in the very old times?"

She answered simply:

"I do not even know who owned it!"

He replied:

"You are quite ignorant of the history of your patroness, St. Haude! Would you like me to tell it you?"

Seeing him beginning to regain his old cheerfulness, she consented, and he told her the tragic event which happened fourteen centuries ago, in the reign of Childebert I.

* * *

"Long ago in the year 545, in the black month of November, the granite arches of the castle on the bay of Port Sall were under the sway of Galon, the rich and powerful Breton lord, who, in spite of his white hair and beard, had brought back from the Pagan island of Great Britain a new wife, Gwinufride, corrupted by the faith of Mayou and Pélage the celebrated Celtic heresiarch.

"He seemed to have forgotten his dead wife, the sweet Florence, daughter of Honorius, Prince of Brest, by whom he had had two children, a daughter, the fair Haude——"

"Like me, my name!" interrupted the girl in surprise.

He continued without appearing to have heard:

"A son, Gurguy."

"Like you," said she again.

But the narrator remained impassive, and proceeded with his story.

"Month had succeeded month since the marriage which caused the unhappiness of Galon's children. At the end of eight years the son, not caring to remain longer at home, went to Brest to see his grandfather Honorius, and from there to Paris, where for twelve years he lived unknown to his friends in the court of the King of France.

"The daughter, ill-treated by her stepmother, had taken the veil and become a nun, repulsing all the lords who sought her hand in marriage; banished to a farmhouse, she lived like the humblest of servants.

"With the gloomy November night came the storm. The sea howled like a famished wolf. The waves, driven by the wind, flung their spray against the stones of the castle.

"Galon and Gwinufride sat alone, silent, listening to the foreboding sounds without. The step-mother, shivering, threw anxious glances towards the door.

"Suddenly the heavy fastener opened, and Gurguy appeared, excited, haggard, his sword covered with blood in his hand, his eyes turned with glaring stare upon Gwinufride, who remained seated, a horrible fear at her

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heart, while Galon sprang up terrified at the startling sight he saw.

"'I struck her thinking that she was guilty. I killed her! Haude, my sister! Pity me! She was a saint!'

"He had barely finished before a mysterious light appeared in the darkest corner of the vast room with its massive pillars, and a white iridescent figure advanced. It was Haude, holding in her hands her head with its fair tresses, which she put on her body, so that only a purple line round her neck showed.

"With a voice that seemed to come from another world, she denounced Gwinufride as the true cause of her death. She said that her step-mother had deceived Gurguy, who had just returned from the French Court, and assured him that his sister had dishonoured her name. The unhappy man had pursued her, charged her with the crime, and struck her down before she could utter a word of protest.

"She had been permitted to return to reveal the crime, to punish the guilty, and to tell the murderer that to expiate the assassination he must go to the holy patriarch of Léon, the Bishop of Pol.

"With threats and curses on her lips, Gwinufride bounded from her seat, leaving Galon terrified in his armchair, but already the hand of death was upon her—a thunderbolt shot through the wall, dashing her to the floor, where she expired, vainly calling Pélage to her assistance.

"The luminous apparition disappeared.

"The next day they buried the unfortunate Haude with great pomp and honour in the church of Laudunvez, and Gurguy went to Occismor to confess.

"The expiation inflicted was a fast of forty days and forty nights, which Gurguy spent in a hut of leaves which he constructed in the middle of the forest adjoining the town of Laude-Tenok, until a raven brought him white bread.

"Then, understanding this to be a sign of pardon from Heaven, he went again to Pol, whom he found surrounded by his canons. On his entrance, a flame crowned the head of Gurguy, and the holy bishop of Léon, changing the defiled name of the murderer to that of Fauguy (Flaming fire), sent him to his monastery on the island of Batz, where he became the mitred abbot and founded the Abbey of St. Matthieu-fin-de Terre."

He ceased speaking, but the young girl, amazed, still listened, believing that he would show her the actual figures that he had so vividly depicted.

He concluded in a sepulchral tone:

"That was the first murder."

She left him, at once fearful and charmed, and for a long time the sweet image of her patron saint pursued her, hovering above her, so clear, so bright, so life-like that the least flutter of a sea-mew or gull made her suddenly lift her head as if she had felt the wings of the holy martyr caressing her.

Some days afterwards, when she was again with Gurguy, she said in a broken and hesitating voice, which was quite new to her, as she noticed his wild and restless look:

"You have not yet told me about the second murder."

An involuntary movement of defiance made her step backwards. He burst out quickly:

"It was done by one of the owners of this same castle whose wife was persecuted by a disloyal steward. But this lord killed himself in a tragic manner after wreaking his vengeance on the steward."

An exclamation of terror escaped her as she murmured:

"Perhaps that is why there are always so many ravens here."

Gurguy, lost in thought, answered:

"Ravens? Perhaps."

He seemed preoccupied, and she heard him repeat a great many times without understanding his words:

"Trémayan. Three murders! The third? Perhaps it is that which Taupry du Chastel committed when on the bridge of Montereau, his battleaxe split open the skull of Jean, the terrible Duge of Burgoyne, for delivering to King Charles VII. the tyrannical guardianship of this great feudatory."

Each time she saw him she found him more changed, looking more and more troubled. He would throw his books far from him angrily, uttering invariably the same words:

"Nothing! Always nothing! Trémayan!"

IV.

Great black clouds scurried from the north-west, veiling the sun which had shone in the early hours of the day, and the terrible waves dashed with wild roaring upon a thousand rocks, when the mayor and the doctor from Plondalmzéau came in all haste to the little stream beside the Castle of Trémayan.

Already there was a crowd of fishermen and peasants, gaping with horror at the corpse beside which the kneeling Naïe Le Floc'h sobbed, and conjectures as to the perpetrator of this atrocious crime passed from one to another.

While the gendarmes kept back the crowd, the doctor examined the dreadful wound. At length he said:

"Death took place four hours ago."

The mayor, pointing out the position of the arms and shoulders, observed:

"They say she tried to escape; and look, the head is nearly detached from the trunk."

Certainly the assassin was a man of exceptional strength. That would help to identify him. On the other hand, it was impossible to tell what weapon had been used to accomplish the murder. Was it a knife, a bill-hook, or a scythe? They could find nothing in the neighbourhood of the stream.

A gendarme volunteered:

"If we were in Africa I should say it was a blow of the yataghan. I have seen many of my comrades settled thus. But again, it would have needed an Arab wrist to strike such a blow."

As he was complaisantly explaining to those around him about the blade of which he spoke, one of the peasants said:

"Stop! It would be like the sabre in the room of the gentleman at the Castle."

A washerwoman added:

"It is true that poor Haude took his milk to him every morning."

But Naïe, raising her tear-stained face, cried:

"Good gracious! It is quite certain that he would never wish to do her harm!"

She was explaining that he was seldom seen except on the sea with her husband at Port Sall, when a gruff voice was heard above the noise crying:

"Haude! My daughter!"

And the father came on the scene mad with grief, his arms raised in a gesture of despair, while the stupefied women whispered:

"Le Floc'h has left his nets; can one believe it?"

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There was another outburst of despair when the unhappy man found himself in the presence of death, and in fierce, angry tones he asked:

"What scoundrel has done this? I will do the same to him!"

He opened his knife and stared round him with bloodshot eyes. They were obliged to reason with him a long time before they could obtain any information.

Certainly he had not gone to sea. He was too good a sailor to venture with such a wind threatening, but he had not been able to prevent Gurguy embarking alone as usual in spite of the strong swell. He was a madman or a fool to risk it. At present he was out there in the open sea.

His frightened eyes gazed at the tumultuous waves, and the angry clouds which were making day into night, a night of shipwreck, terror, and sorrow.

"This time he is lost!" decided a fisherman, after vainly trying to distinguish a sail.

Again all attention was concentrated on the little group weeping in their grief, in the centre of which was the corpse.

They had reascended the road leading to the beach, and gone some way in the direction of Kersaint, when a child of twelve years, coming from the ruins, said in a stifled voice to one of his comrades:

"There is blood in the gentleman's room at the Castle."

The mayor had heard. He laid his hand on the boy's shoulder, asking:

"What is that you say?"

The child explained that after the peasant spoke of the stranger's sabre, he had had the curiosity to go to see it, knowing that M. Gurguy was on the sea. Hoisting himself up to the loop-hole, of which the shutter had not been closed, he had seen the weapon and the blood.

The doctor said emphatically:

"We must go to see. We cannot wait for the magistrate. He will not arrive before the nightfall."

Leaving the disconsolate procession to go on to the Le Floc'hs' house, the mayor, the doctor, and the sergeant, went to the keep above which the weird cawing of the ravens still sounded.

As soon as the door was forced, they saw that the child had been right. On the white sheet of the bed there were large red stains, and across was thrown the yatagan wet with blood.

The chief gendarme said:

"You see I was right about the weapon." The mayor concluded: "Gurguy was certainly the

There was a crowd of fishermen and peasants.

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assassin. It is strange. The mother herself seemed to defend him."

But the doctor who had gone up to the table showed a paper on which were some lines recently written; he read aloud:

"Gurguy went to look for Haude, and having found her near a stream washing some apparel called her by name. She, not recognising him after his long absence, and not knowing why he called, left her washing and fled.

"Putting his hand on his sword he pursued and caught her, striking her on the neck so that he cut off her head."

A red smear as if a blood-stained hand had touched the paper terminated this fatal message.

They all gazed at him bewildered.

The doctor looked at the other papers and the open and closed books lying in disorder on the table; they were books relating to the antiquities of the country, historical studies—more particularly those concerning the Castle of Trémayan and its different possessors. There on the leaf of a book, conspicuous in big letters were the words:

"Trémayan—The Three Murders."

"Ah! that is it!" finished the doctor. "But he is mad, this Gurguy."

Little by little he constructed the drama, divining what had passed in the stranger's mind who must have imagined himself descended from the ancient lords, because of his name, which was that of the original owner.

Without doubt the meeting with the young daughter of Le Floc'h, whose name was Haude, had turned his brain.

Traces of this monomania were found in some lines showing a debate which Gurguy must have had with himself, a struggle against the growing invasion of murderous thoughts.

The task of the Court of Brest would be singularly simple. It was only necessary to leave the room as they found it, and to seize the culprit. The chief gendarme gave the signal to his men, one was placed to guard the door, and another sent to Port Sall.

* * * * *

The same evening when the magistrate arrived at Kersaint, some fisherman discovered on the shore facing the Castle of Trémayan, not far from the stream, a corpse much bruised by the rugged edges of the rocks. It was that of Gurguy, drowned according to the prophecies of the sailors.

Had he voluntarily sought death in a moment of consciousness, of lucidity, to expiate the murder of Haude le Floc'h, or was he simply a victim to his own imprudence? No one could ever know. His books and papers were carefully examined and only confirmed the first diagnosis of the doctor, but could give no information as to his standing in the world.

Without parents, family and friends, unknown to all, the unfortunate man was buried in a disused corner of the cemetery under the name of Gurguy, which was perhaps not his. Only the black ravens remained the faithful watchers in the ruins of the Castle of the Three Murders.

J. Toudouze.

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A SEPARATION.

The room which I inhabited at that time in Via Bagutta was really higher up than was needful. I told myself so four times a day, when I ascended the one hundred and twelve steps that separated me from the level of the throng in the street, but because when one had reached the top there was to be enjoyed a magnificent panorama of roofs and chimney-tops, I stayed there. Besides, in the course of four months I had made the acquaintance of all my neighbours: and usually among the neighbours of a bachelor there is someone that he would be sorry to miss.

It was there that I knew the oddest wedded pair that can be imagined. To say Signor Sulpicio and Signora Coneetta were one, is not a metaphor; for between them they hardly had as much flesh and bones as an ordinary well-set-up individual. But their united ages were a decade more than a century and a half. And if Signora Coneetta had taken the freak to stand upon her husband's head, she would have bumped the ceiling. Now, the rooms in that house are three metres and a half in height—eleven feet eight inches, by the English measure.

Whoever has solved these arithmetical problems will have before him, I should think, the precise likeness of these old persons, and sees them, as I do in my mind's eye, long, meagre, gaunt, with white heads, faces seamed by wrinkles, with sunken, gleaming eyes.

They had shared their joys and sorrows, bed and board for sixty years; and had gazed into each other's eyes until the two faces had grown alike, and but for their noses, they might have been supposed to be brother and sister. But those noses had persisted in remaining the antithesis of each other: that of the husband was hooked like an eagle's beak, and seemed to keep watch upon all that went into his mouth.

Signora Coneetta's nose turned up, as if prudently withdrawing in order not to embarrass the good mouthfuls. The comparison is not mine; they invented it themselves, at the wane of the honeymoon, in a moment of anger over a dish that tasted of smoke. It was the first cloud in their azure, an ugly cloud that rose from the dish to their noses, and then passed into their habits of feeling. They ended by believing themselves totally incompatible.

Coneetta spoke of returning to her parents, and Sulpicio was willing that she should do so, but as they were on the wedding journey the matter was deferred. But the fatal word had been spoken—a separation. The day after, Sulpicio recalled the morning discourse which his father-in-law had addressed to him; remembered how he had sworn to make his bride happy, a crowd of tender memories, of sage reflection, impelled him to induce Coneetta to remain under the conjugal roof.

On her part, Coneetta, as judicious a young woman as ever was, had called to mind her mamma's counsels, the "Yes" spoken at the altar, the envy of her friends who remained spinsters; she thought of the grief of her family, the secret joy and false pity of the other girls—and concluded that on the whole Sulpicio was not so bad, and that it was all the fault of that unlucky dish. Then the pair smiled, clasped hands and exchanged the kiss of peace. But there was a tacit understanding that they took each other on trial. That trial, having weathered a thousand tempests, had lasted for sixty years.

Now and then the neighbours were startled by a shrill scream. "That is Coneetta!" they said. And Coneetta it was. She had a way—when she had launched at her domestic tyrant all the charming epithets accumulated in her verbal researches of the past sixty years, without conquering the forces of his vocabulary—she had a way, then, of giving one final shriek. People ran to the scene and found that old Sulpicio had sought safety in flight down the stairs while Coneetta flung at him from the landing one last descriptive adjective.

The first cares to the injured were lavished on Coneetta; and we had learnt that these must consist in letting her talk until her wrath had evaporated. Woe to any who should pity her or tell her that her husband was not the right sort; for when her anger seemed spent, it would blaze up like a lucifer match, to protest that she wished to marry him and would keep to him; that what her Sulpicio was nobody could know but herself; nobody need teach her to read in his heart, she knew all about him, these many years, and he was worth all the rest of mankind put together.

When the storm was over, and the landing deserted, she would peer out from her room, look about her, her head shaking under its big black silk cap, slip down to the next floor, and knock at the door of Signora Nina, a young widow who lived with an infirm uncle who was a friend of Sulpicio. Coneetta knew that her man was very fond of his friend's young neice; and she not only was not jealous but begged the aid of Nina as a peacemaker. About the same time the fugitive husband would return stealthily into the house, climb the stairs, and invade, panting, my apartment. He knew that Coneetta loved me like a son, that a word from me would influence her, and trusted to me to restore domestic tranquility.

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My part as mediator was not difficult, and I do not think that Signora Nina had a harder task. As soon as Coneetta saw me, before I spoke a word of my embassy, she would press my hands between her knotty ones, and, mutely shaking her head and raising her eyes to the ceiling, express to me her sorrow for what had happened, her readiness to return to her wifely duty, her gratitude for my good offices. In fact the pair could not live apart; they loved as they always had loved, in warlike guise, but as greatly as mortals may.

When the repentant Sulpicio appeared in the doorway, with a careless and indifferent air, not wishing to show emotion in my presence, Coneetta would remember some stitch in time that would save nine, and begin to rummage in her pockets for her thimble and needlecase. Then I slipped through the door, or looked out of the window, or took up a book. Sulpicio would draw near to Coneetta—Coneetta would turn a little towards Sulpicio; I could see with the tail of my eye their trembling hands clasp each other, their faces near together, lit by smiles, a few tears run down their furrowed cheeks. Finally, they embraced fervently, and I continued to look in another direction, and talk about the weather, thinking within myself that those tears and smiles were altogether worthy of the springtime of life and a pair of rosy faces.

Once, however, the squall was so terrific, that before the two ships entered together into the safe harbour of domestic concord it took several hours and much diplomacy. The word separation had been pronounced by each, and neither would be the first to unsay it. Unluckily for their well-wishers, the husband and wife had gone out of the house, and by different doors. The servant, a semi-idiotic girl, understood nothing except that master and mistress were both out. I seated myself by the chimney corner to await their return. It was a glorious winter's day. My thoughts were rather amusing; I was trying to guess which of the pair would come home first. Which? Coneetta, no doubt. Just then I heard the *frou-frou* of a gown; I rose, turned, and found myself face to face with Signora Nina, the young widow of the first floor.

The signora appeared surprised to see me, and was quite embarrassed, all the more because, having entered with her accustomed familiarity, she wished not to have the air of committing an indiscretion; and she looked round to see whether someone would come and let me know, indirectly, that she was using her right of *entrée*. Meanwhile I bowed to her, and was about to speak. She forestalled me. "Signora Coneetta is not at home?"

"Nor Signor Sulpicio. I am waiting for one or the other of them."

"And I was looking for one or the other. I will come again later."

But the knowledge that both were away from the house seemed to disquiet her, and she did not move.

"If you would like to wait here, I will come another time," said I.

"Thanks—you probably are come in order to——"

"For the same reason——"

I invited her to take my place at the fireside; yet when she was seated there, I did not leave the room. Signora Nina did not know me, but I knew Signora Nina very well. Often, from my window above hers, I had noted the colour of her hair and vainly hoped for the opportunity to learn the colour of her eyes. Now the white little hands that I had seen beating a tattoo on the window-sill were playing with the tongs of the domestic hearth; I saw clearly the face that had been a mystery to me. Ah, the Signora Nina was beautiful, or at all events she pleased me very much.

She saw that I remained standing, and made me a courteous sign to be seated: we waited in silence for some minutes; no one came. Little by little, that silence weighed upon us; she spoke to me of Sulpicio, and I spoke to her of Coneetta. When she learnt that I was mediator between the old couple, she smiled slightly. What a charming smile!

"Such a pity," she said, "to live sixty years together without coming to a good understanding!"

"These are surface agitations," I observed. "They are really fond of each other."

She made a little grimace, and was silent. After a while she said: "What time is it?"

"Four o'clock."

"It is late. I must go. I will come back again."

"It really wants thirteen minutes to four."

Signora Nina smiled and did not go away. I did not know why, but my heart was full of joy-bells ringing.

Then entered Sulpicio and Coneetta, hand in hand.

"Is peace made?" Signora Nina and I questioned with our eyes.

"It is," the eyes of the old pair responded.

"I came to pay my respects to you," said the widow to Coneetta, "but it is late and I ought to go."

Coneetta replied with great good humour: "All the better that Signor Carlo was here to keep you company."

At this my heart beat harder, and I perceived that the widow blushed. She went away; I departed very soon after.

All day long I thought of Signora Nina: I dreamt of her all night; the next day I passed the forenoon at the window in order to see her, and had the good fortune to exchange a good-morning with her; during the next month I never failed to go at the same hour to the window, and always with the same happy result. One day I ventured to smile at her, the next day she deigned to smile on me—and five months and one week later, we were married.

We were happy. We lived in a pretty little house sufficiently far from the madding crowd; our windows were not overlooked by inconvenient neighbours; the rooms were sunny, and our new furniture gleamed in the light. Nina's old uncle had absolutely refused—as he phrased it—to set us up in housekeeping with his many infirmities, and had gone to live with a sister of his in the country. We were content to be alone; our rooms were decorated in pink, and filled with visions not less rosy. Nina had such grace of manner, such a sweet smile, a look so serene, a voice all music, and a certain way of placing her hands on my shoulders that meant "I love you"—that I could have spent whole hours in contemplation of her. She had a single defect: that of slamming the doors when she passed from one room to another. Often, startled from my fantasies by the bang of a door, I should have yielded to an impulse of irritation if her rosy face had not at once appeared before me.

And it must be admitted that I was a model husband to Nina. I never left her alone, or at least as little as my business allowed; I never contradicted her; I anticipated her wishes, never spoke an unkind word to her; I did a thousand childish things to amuse her. I had, however, one slight defect: I was horribly absent-minded; sometimes, absorbed in some foolish fantasy, I failed to answer her smile or her speech.

There came a day when I was unusually abstracted, and she banged a door louder than common. An "Oh!" escaped me; she heard, and I regretted it. But in vain. Another time, Nina caught me in a brown study; she walked on tiptoe and was very careful to make no noise in shutting the door. The clangour of the forge of Vulcan would not have caused me to leap quicker from my chair. I ran after her, embraced her—and we had a great laugh together. But the ice was broken; we had mutually admitted one thought; we were not perfection.

However hard she tried, Nina could not correct herself; only when she slammed a door, she took on a certain air, half contrite, half mischievous, that made her more beautiful. As for me, it was in vain that, caught with my wits a wool-gathering, I shook my head and stared—I became neither wiser nor handsomer.

Our honeymoon had lasted many months, unclouded. Then came a day, a day of July, when the sun glared and the heat was cruel. She asserts that she began the quarrel, asking me what I was thinking about with my head in the clouds. But it was I who gave the first offence in the form of a very little swear word *apropos* of a door. One mild sarcasm led to another, and soon I was sulky and Nina in tears. Another occasion ended in the same way, the next time the thing went further.

"This life is unbearable," she said.

"Indeed?" said I teasingly.

"Indeed! Ah, indeed! Oh, I knew that you were tired of me. It is almost a year that we have been married."

"Ten months," I replied.

"Which has seemed like ten years to you! Our happiness has lasted too long! Oh, how unfortunate I am! You will end by hating me, if you don't do so already—and I—I shall come to hate you!"

I wanted to catch her up in my arms and run about the room with her and her wrath—a precious armful—until she should cry "enough"; I wanted to fall on my knees before her and say my little prayers for her forgiveness—all sorts of things that an indulgent husband could think of, in order to make her smile. I glanced at her; she turned her shoulders to me; I took a step towards her and she ran into another room—and I, in a pet, descended the stairs, remorseful before accomplishing my fell revenge. I took a turn round the square, not being able to go far away, and keeping in view the little home where had been my happiness. I thought of Sulpicio and Coneetta; and told myself that there was nobody to act as peacemaker between my wife and me, and that we would not have stood it if there were.

I reflected: "This is the first time—who knows if it will be the last! I must go back to her, comfort her, and tell her that we never must do so again. But how will she receive me? What wouldn't I give to be sure that she will reply to my words with a good kiss! Then we would weep and laugh over the affair together, and never speak of it any more."

All these reflections brought me several times as far as the threshold of our house, and as often I withdrew; at last I succeeded in overcoming the spell, sprang through the doorway, ran upstairs four steps at once, and in an instant was face to face with Nina, who had come to meet me on the landing. She hid her face between her hands and did not speak to me. I put an arm about her and led her into the parlour; I made her sit upon my knee and gently took her hands away from my eyes, laid my cheek against hers, and begged her forgiveness. But instead of pardoning me, she burst afresh into sobs, threw her arms round my neck, and buried her face on my shoulder. My heart beat hard; Nina's actions were expressive of misfortune. What happened during my absence? After many questions and caresses and, on her part, a great sob:

"She is dead!" said Nina.

"Who?"

"Coneetta, poor Coneetta!" My wife was silent for a moment; then raising her head, she added: "Their separation has taken place."

"Who has told you about it?"

"A friend who came to see me; poor Coneetta passed away yesterday, very suddenly."

"And Sulpicio?"

"He is in despair; he does not speak a word; he seems dazed."

"I must go and look him up."

"Oh, my dear, go as soon as possible."

I went. The heart of the old man had not been able to resist the oppression of solitude; and at night, a few hours after his companion had been carried away, he laid himself down in his widowed bed with the certainty that he should never see the morning.

His dead face appeared to smile at me, and to tell me that not even death had separated them. I went home with sadness in my heart, a gentle sadness that did me good, I did not like to tell my wife the news, and was glad when someone else told it to her, in my presence. As soon as we were alone she clasped me in her arms as though she were afraid.

"Carlo!"

"Nina!"

She raised her eyes as if to read my thought, and slowly murmured these words:

"That will be the way with us, will it not?"

I. Farina.

RESULT OF JUMBLED STORY COMPETITION.—No. 25.

The first prize of £5 goes to Mr. Bernard Parry, 2, Sterndale Road, West Kensington.

The following receive £1 each: Mr. R. A. McWhirter, 32, Wake Street, Plymouth; Miss Britt, 32, Kensington Court Mansions, W.; Mr. A. S. Holland, 68, Longridge Road, Earl's Court, W.

£2 goes to Mr. M. E. Burne, The Mall, Sligo, Ireland.

Key to Jumble Story.—No. 25.

1	40	110	11	81	117	85	122	82
51	80	79	9	43	12	55	103	48
46	31	83	96	58	105	62	5	76
45	17	39	65	116	101	119	106	113
47	35	114	42	73	37	75	107	71
32	6	15	120	20	111	13	89	118
3	8	21	77	56	112	90	44	64
38	59	57	25	91	95	49	98	53
28	36	30	86	115	87	104	72	2
67	102	84	16	54	88	92	74	14
4	33	19	70	60	41	97	108	
50	109	29	22	94	66	61	10	
68	34	26	23	121	93	7	78	
69	24	27	63	100	99	18	52	

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By **ALLEN UPWARD**, *Author of "Secrets of the Courts of Europe," "The Prince of Balkistan," etc., etc.*

SUMMARY.

Eleanor Margaret Owen is charged with the murder of her benefactress, Ann Lewis. Charles Prescott, who has known Eleanor since a child, holds the brief for the prosecution. His friend, George Tressamer, is in love with Eleanor, and holds the brief for her defence. The prosecution is vigorously pressed by John Lewis, deceased's nephew. The case comes on at the Mynyddshire Assizes. The result of the cross examination of Lewis by Tressamer is that public suspicion, which, for a time, rested on Lewis, is completely removed.

CHAPTER VI. (*continued*).

The next witness was the butler, John Simons, who deposed to having fastened up the door at half-past ten on the night in question, and to having found the latch stuck on the following day. He further described the finding of the blood-stains on the bedroom door-handle. His cross-examination was listened to with interest.

"Has it ever occurred to you, yourself, to accidentally raise the latch too far in the same way?"

"Oh, yes, I've often done it, sir."

"Were you out on the evening of the first of June?"

The butler, a good-natured-looking man, with a pleasant smile, but whose mind was evidently rather unhinged by the position he found himself in, looked bewildered at this, and rather frightened. The barrister hastened to reassure him.

"What I mean is this. If you had been out some time during the evening, before half-past ten, would it not have been possible for you to have accidentally left the latch in this position?"

The witness looked relieved, and hastened to answer.

"Yes, of course, I might have."

Tressamer turned round to the jury to see if they appreciated his point. Then he resumed.

"You have known Miss Owen for some time, I think. Tell me, have you ever noticed that she was liable to nervous headaches?"

"I have heard her say she had a headache."

"What was the last time you heard her say so?"

The witness looked puzzled, and seemed to be trying to remember.

"Perhaps I can help you," said the barrister. "About this very time, now, just before this happened?"

"Ah, yes, sir, now you remind me, I remember. When she didn't come down that morning, I said to Rebecca: 'Very likely she's had another bad night.'"

"*Another* bad night? Then she was liable to insomnia?"

The witness stared.

"I beg your pardon. I mean, she sometimes did suffer from want of sleep?"

"She sometimes had bad nights, sir."

"Exactly. And you remembered she had been having them just before this?"

"Well, no, sir; I can't say as I do remember that."

The barrister frowned impatiently.

"Well, tell me this," he said: "do you know what she was in the habit of doing on these occasions, when she couldn't get to sleep?"

"No, sir."

"Did you ever hear of her going out for a walk at night?"

The whole court was eagerly following this cross-examination, as the defence now began to be visible. But the answer of the witness fell like lead:

"No."

Tressamer looked deeply disappointed. He had been baffled just where he had evidently built upon success.

He only put one more question.

"You had a good many opportunities of seeing your mistress and Miss Owen together. Did they always seem to you to be on friendly, affectionate terms?"

"Yes, sir, always."

"Thank you."

This finished the butler's evidence, as Mr. Pollard wisely abstained from any re-examination.

He next proceeded to call the parlour-maid, Rebecca Rees.

A pretty, vain, pert-looking girl stepped into the box, and took hold of the Testament.

"Take off your glove," said the clerk.

She did so with some difficulty, as the thing had about half-a-dozen buttons to unfasten. Then she was sworn and proceeded to tell her story.

In a shrill voice, which visibly irritated the judge, she went on, and described how she had gone to bed, how she awoke at midnight and heard a sound proceeding from below.

"What was the nature of the sound?" asked the counsel who was examining her.

"It was a groan," was the reply, "like as if somebody was being hurt."

The prisoner's counsel here hurriedly turned over the pages of his brief till he came to a certain place, where he made a note in the margin.

"What did you hear next?"

"I heard the prisoner going downstairs."

The Judge: "What do you mean? Could you see her?"

Witness: "No, sir, I heard her."

Mr. Pollard: "She means she recognised the footsteps, my lord."

The Judge: "Don't interrupt me, please." (*To witness*) "Young woman, be careful. That is not the way to give evidence, as you know perfectly well. You musn't tell us

that you heard the prisoner. You heard footsteps, that's all." (*A pause.*) "Now, Mr. Pollard, you can go on."

Mr. Pollard: "Did you recognise the footsteps?"

His lordship frowned and shrugged his shoulders.

Witness: "I thought it was Miss Owen."

Mr. Pollard: "Well, now tell us what you did."

The girl proceeded to describe how she had got up and gone down to the front-door.

"How was it fastened?" was the next question.

"It was on the latch. The bolts were drawn back, and it wasn't locked or yet chained."

"Did you see whether the latch was up or down?"

"I object."

Mr. Tressamer had risen in a fresh burst of indignation.

"My lord, my friend has distinctly suggested the answer to the witness. I object to her being allowed to say anything about the latch after such a question as that."

"I didn't intend to lead her, my lord," said Pollard.

The judge hesitated for awhile between his natural desire to hear the answer and his fear that the witness was not wholly impartial. Perhaps a slight prejudice against Tressamer's hectoring manner had something to do with his decision.

"You should have asked her whether she had noticed anything about the latch," he said at length. "Did you?" he added, turning to the witness.

"It was *down*, sir," she returned, answering Pollard's question rather than the judge's.

The importance of the answer was chiefly in its disposing of Tressamer's suggestion that the butler might have forced the latch up. He turned round to the jury, and assumed the air of one who is being unfairly treated. But of course he could not help their seeing that the prosecution had scored a point.

Rebecca's evidence was continued till she came to where she heard footsteps ascending the stairs.

"How long was this afterwards?" asked Pollard.

"About ten minutes."

"Did you recognise those footsteps?"

"No, I didn't notice them; but I think they must have been Miss Owen's, or else I should have noticed the difference."

Tressamer ground his teeth. He was afraid to interrupt again, for fear of the effect on the minds of the jury. They are apt to think a man is losing when he interrupts too often.

"What happened next?"

"She went into the bedroom below."

"What bedroom?"

"Her own, I suppose, or Miss Lewis's."

"You couldn't tell which?"

"No."

"Well, and how long was the person, whoever it was, inside?"

"About a quarter of an hour, I should think. I thought she had come in for good, and gone to bed."

The Judge (*suddenly looking up from his notes*): "Look here, don't let me have to stop you again, or I shall do something you won't like. It's not for you to tell us what you thought. Confine yourself to answering the questions."

Mr. Pollard (*thinking the judge has finished*): "And then what did you——"

The Judge (*superbly indifferent to Mr. Pollard*): "Do you realise that you are giving evidence in a court of justice? You must be extremely careful—extremely careful." (*A long pause; Mr. Pollard afraid to begin again.*) "Well, do you ask her anything more?"

Mr. Pollard: "I beg your lordship's pardon. If your lordship pleases." (*To witness*): "After the quarter of an hour, did you hear anything more?"

Witness (*now thoroughly frightened*): "Yes."

"What did you hear?"

"I heard her come out."

At this point the judge threw down his pen, and threw himself back in his chair. Mr. Pollard hastened to take off the edge of his lordship's wrath by reprimanding the witness himself.

"You mustn't tell us that. You don't know it was the prisoner. What was it you actually heard?"

The girl now felt and looked ready to resort to tears. She really did not know what answer was safe, and prudently adopted a strictly non-committal form.

"I heard a noise below."

"What was the noise like?"

"Like someone going downstairs."

"Well, why didn't you say that? You heard footsteps going down?"

"Yes."

The judge took up his pen again and took down the answer.

"And did you notice the footsteps this time?"

"Yes; they were——"

"Stop! Not so fast. Answer my questions."

Mr. Pollard was by this time a little less nervous than the witness. He was really utterly at a loss how to frame his next question without incurring Tressamer's wrath or the rebuke of the Bench. At last he blurted out:

"Was there anything different about the footsteps this time?"

Tressamer opened his mouth, but the judge was before him this time:

"Don't answer. Really, Mr. Pollard, you are as bad as the witness. You know you ought not to put a question like that." Then, seeing that the poor young man was quite unequal to extracting the desired evidence, his lordship quietly took over the examination himself:

"Did you notice the footsteps this time when they were going downstairs?"

"Yes, sir—my lord."

"Did anything strike you about them?"

"Yes, my lord."

"What?"

"They were heavier, sir, and thumpy."

"Had you ever heard anything like it before? I mean, did they or did they not sound familiar in spite of this heaviness?"

"No, my lord; I don't remember."

"Did you go downstairs again?"

"No, sir."

The judge turned round to the jury with complacency, and smiled as if to say: "You see, gentlemen, how it can be done by one who knows how." Then he asked the counsel:

"Now, Mr. Pollard, do you want anything more from this witness?"

"No, my lord, thank you."

He sat down, feeling considerably the worse for his experience, and Tressamer got up.

He looked severely at the young woman for some seconds, and then suddenly asked her:

"Why do you dislike Miss Owen?"

At once the court was all ears. It was one of those strokes of brilliant advocacy which few men care to venture on. It was dangerous, but in the present case it was completely successful. The witness lost countenance, stammered, and with difficulty got out a lame denial.

"I don't dislike her particular."

"Do you like her?"

"No."

"Did you ever have any complaint against her when you were her servant?" (He intentionally chose a phrase calculated to irritate.)

"I wasn't her servant," was the angry reply. "I should be very sorry to be."

"I thought so. Tell me, you said to my learned friend that the first sound you heard on this night was like somebody being hurt, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"When did you discover that?"

"When did I discover that?"

"Yes, woman; don't echo me like that. You know what I mean."

"I thought so at the time."

"*What!*" The barrister assumed an expression of amazement.

"I thought so all along."

"Then why didn't you say so all along? When you were before the magistrates, did you say anything about somebody being hurt?"

"Yes, I think so."

"You think so! Remember you are on your oath, please, and that I have a copy before me of what you actually did say before the magistrates. When you were before them, did you say a syllable about a sound as if somebody were being hurt?"

"I don't know whether I did or not."

"I thought so. Did you tell the magistrate that you thought it was the sound of someone in troubled sleep?" Here the barrister read from his brief.

"Yes, sir."

"And that you thought"—here he turned over the page at which he was looking and glanced at the top of the next, so as to give the impression that he was still reading her exact words—"that the sound came from Miss Owen's room?"

The witness fell into the trap.

"I dare say I did," she answered.

The judge was equally taken in. He had read the depositions, but had not remembered their contents clearly enough to check the barrister. Tressamer went to another point.

Taking out his watch, he said:

"I want to test your notion of ten minutes. Will you turn round, with your back to the clock, and tell me when one minute has passed, after I have said the word 'Now.'"

All the jurymen and most of the other persons in court took out their watches to check this experiment. The girl turned round, and Tressamer gave the word "Now!"

"Tick—tick—tick—tick—tick——"

"Now!" said the witness, turning quickly round.

A general smile passed over the court.

"Seventeen seconds exactly, my lord," observed Tressamer. "The witness's ten minutes may therefore be put down as three. You have told his lordship that the last set of footsteps you heard sounded heavy when they went downstairs. Will you swear that they did not sound equally heavy coming up?"

"I didn't notice."

"I didn't ask you if you had noticed. Don't try and shirk my question, please. Will you pledge your oath that they weren't equally heavy coming upstairs?"

"No, I won't swear it."

"Have you any reason, except your dislike of the prisoner, for suggesting that those footsteps were hers?"

The judge interposed.

"Really, Mr. Tressamer, you mustn't put it like that. She says that she didn't dislike the prisoner, and you must take her answer. I allow great latitude to counsel in your situation, but you must treat the witness fairly."

"As your lordship pleases."

Tressamer sat down, rather glad to leave his question unanswered, as the effect thereby produced on the jury's mind would be better than if the witness had had a chance of offering her grounds for suspicion.

"Lucy Griffiths."

This was the housemaid, and her evidence contained nothing of importance. In cross-examination she admitted that she had detected no likeness between the descending footsteps heard by her and Miss Owen's. In fact, she had at first thought they sounded like a man's.

The next witness was the fisherman, who stated to Mr. Pollard that he had met a female about midnight on the eventful first of June, whom he at the time believed to be the prisoner. He thought so still.

His cross-examination elicited two facts: first, that he had once met Miss Owen at the same late hour before; secondly, that he had met other persons going in the same direction the same night, at or about the same time.

Tressamer chose to emphasise this point.

"Could you tell those gentlemen," he said, indicating the jury, who instantly tried to look as if they had been attending, and had not long ago given up the task in despair, "what the other people were like whom you saw?"

"Well, one of them was a man."

"Come, that's something; but it's not much. Can't you tell us what sort of a man? Was he tall?"

The jury instantly looked at Lewis.

"No; I didn't notice as how he was particular tall. Middlin' short, I should say."

"About my height?"

"Yes; about that. Summat about your size."

Tressamer laughed, and a smile went round the court at the serious way in which the witness gave his answer.

"Well, who else did you see?"

"I see another man afore then."

"Ah! Was he tall?"

"Why, yes; I think he was."

The jury again looked at Lewis. But that gentleman's face revealed no emotion, except a sort of sullen wrath which had overhung it ever since his last appearance in the witness-box.

At last, when all the other witnesses had been disposed of, the policeman was called and gave the usual routine evidence.

Mr. Pollard was rash enough to ask him:

"Who came to the station to inform the police?"

But his opponent at once objected, and the judge ruled the question out. Mr. Lewis's indignant declaration, therefore, which Prescott had struck out of his brief with such prompt disdain, fared equally ill in court, and was not allowed to get to the ear of the judge or jury.

At last the evidence was gone through, and then the prosecuting counsel stood up and made the final announcement.

"That is the case for the Crown, my lord."

"I will adjourn for half-an-hour," observed the judge, getting on his feet.

The whole court rose with him, and in a few minutes the entire place was empty.

CHAPTER VII.

Half-an-hour.

Scrambling, rushing, hurrying, squeezing, talking, laughing, and sighing, the great throng poured out of the building and dispersed down the streets of Abertaff. One topic was on every tongue. The fate of the prisoner was the sole thing discussed. They weighed the evidence, they repeated it, they distorted it. Some were violently in favour of the prisoner, and considered half the witnesses to be committing perjury. Others were violently against her, and could not see, so they professed, a shadow of doubt in in the case from first to last. Others, again, in complete doubt as to how the case would end, wisely declined to commit themselves till they had heard more of the defence.

Then, again, these parties were subdivided into groups. There was the ignorant group, who knew nothing about the case, and went about asking questions of their wiser neighbours. There was the mysterious group, who suspected many things, but said nothing, contenting themselves with shaking their heads in corners, and suggesting that not half the real motives of the parties to the affair had come out at all. And there was the well-informed group of those who had watched the whole thing from first to last, and knew more, far more, about it than

the counsel on either side, or the criminal either, for that matter.

And they were not churlish in bestowing their information, either. There were the Lewisite partisans, who knew exactly the value of the jewels to a halfpennny, and how they were kept in a box under the bed, and how the prisoner had carried them off by stealth, and buried them somewhere in the sands of Newton Bay. Some of these, the more charitably disposed, could go even farther than this. They explained how it was that the prisoner had never meant to commit the murder at all, but simply to steal the jewels, but had been interrupted in the act by the unexpected waking of the deceased woman. They grew impressive as they pictured the elder woman suddenly roused from sleep by the midnight robber, and the emotions of that robber detected in the act of guilt. They could tell you how she started back in terror, and then, realising that ruin was upon her, succumbed to temporary frenzy, and with the weapon which she had brought to open the jewel-chest, dealt the fatal blow to her unhappy victim.

Roused from sleep by the midnight robber.

Others, less lenient in their views, had obtained quite different details. They could relate numerous previous attempts of the prisoner on the life of her benefactress. They knew how she had sought to introduce poison into her food, from which she was only saved by a miraculous chance, which caused her to be summoned from the table just as she was about to taste the fatal dish. Also, how she had on one occasion led her victim along the cliff with the well-formed purpose of pushing her over the edge; only the curate happened to come along and meet them, and accompanied them till the opportunity was gone.

The Owenite section, on the other hand, had their account, equally authentic, and, if possible, more minute and graphic than the other. They would tell you more about their villain, Lewis, than he himself could possibly have remembered. They took you back to his childhood. They started you with the well-known story of his beating his little sister, the sister in the North, whom he had refused to go and see. They explained the causes which led to his expulsion from school after school. They tracked him to Australia, and unearthed dark secrets in his life out there which would have made the bushranger Kelly reject him from his historic gang. Finally, they brought him back to England, a ruined desperado, intent on getting at his relative's wealth by fair means or foul. The robbery of her jewels was only part of his scheme. By killing her he obtained the whole of her wealth at once. Then a victim became necessary—a stalking horse to mislead the minions of justice, and whose punishment would insure his own safety. He was thus a double murderer.

So the tongues wagged. Meanwhile, the object of these rumours had made his way round in a towering passion to the seat from which his solicitor was trying to get away.

"What does this mean?" he cried, as soon as he got near enough to speak without being heard by others. "Are you playing me false? Where is Mr. Prescott?"

"He was called away into the other court," said Mr. James Pollard, the barrister's brother, who was a partner with his father in the Porthstone firm.

"He ought not to have gone. Your brother managed the case wretchedly. I wasn't allowed to say the most important thing of all."

"My brother did the best he could. No one could dream that Prescott would desert us like this. I shall never give him another brief, I promise you."

By this time they had got outside the door of the court-house. They turned towards a hotel close by, where a general luncheon was put on the table for the convenience of people having business in the assize-courts. The civil court had risen a few minutes before the other, and the place was crowded with solicitors, witnesses, jurymen, and the general public.

"Look here, Mr. Pollard," Lewis said, as they fought their way into the room, "I could have proved that about the jewels up to the hilt if I had been allowed. Why, my aunt was speaking to me about them that very night, and she said Miss Owen knew of them."

"And why on earth didn't you tell me all this before?" retorted the solicitor.

"I thought I had."

"Thought you had! Goodness me! that's just like you laymen. You keep back the chief points in a case, and then you're angry with us because we don't guess them by instinct. Why didn't you tell the judge this when he was examining you?"

"Because it wasn't said in the prisoner's presence."

"Pooh! Why, it was evidence of motive. But there, it's no good trying to explain the law of evidence to you. If anything's gone wrong, you have yourself to thank for it—a good deal, that's all. What will you take?"

And they fell to on the refreshments before them.

Meanwhile the barristers, whose self-imposed code forbade them to enter a public hotel room in a town where the assizes were being held, had straggled off, some to the County Club, and others to the common-room reserved for their especial use in the chief hotel of the place.

Among the latter was Tressamer, who found Prescott awaiting him anxiously, and trying, with poor success, to get through the wing of a fowl. He (Prescott) looked pale and dejected; but Tressamer rushed into the place in a state of exaggerated buoyancy, and called for a bottle of champagne.

"George, how goes it?" cried his friend.

"All went merry as a marriage-bell," returned the other. "Have no fear; keep up your heart, old man. Leave it to me; I'll get her off. Much obliged to you for going away, though. Young Pollard did come some croppers, I can tell you. Buller's against us, of course, on the evidence; but what do I care? I'll get the jury, see if I don't. I'll make a speech this afternoon the like of which hasn't often been heard in this dead-and-alive hole. Lewis, beware! Here's confusion to the guilty, and safety to the innocent!"

He had rattled on in a jerky, excited, nervous manner, and he wound up by drinking off nearly a tumblerful of champagne. Prescott could hardly make him out. He feared the strain of the last few weeks was unhinging his friend's mind.

"Gently," he said, remonstrating; "you must keep cool, or you will spoil everything. Beware of old Buller. When he is giving you the most rope, he is getting ready to come

Tressamer rushed into the place.

down on you most heavily at the end. I think you'll find it a weak jury. They will do pretty well as the judge tells them."

"Don't you be afraid, Charlie," retorted the other in the same unnaturally careless strain; "it's my case, and I know how to manage it. I've sworn to save her, and, by God! I'll do it, if I have to declare I did the thing myself! By Jove, didn't I touch up that scoundrel in the witness-box, though? You saw me, Beltrope?"

He called to another barrister, who had been present in court the whole morning.

"Yes, I know," answered Beltrope; "but you'd better be awfully careful, Tressamer. So far as I could see, your line of defence is that Lewis must have done it. Now, unless you're prepared with some very strong evidence against him, you'd far better change that tack before it's too late. You'll have old Buller dead against you, as Prescott says, and, I dare say, the jury too. Whatever you do, don't leave it in such a way that they must convict one or the other."

"Rubbish! You don't understand," replied Tressamer. "Wait till you've heard my speech, that's all. Well, I must be off." He drank some more champagne. "I want to have a wash just to cool my head."

And he darted out of the room to go upstairs. The other barristers looked at each other and exchanged meaning glances. They did not like to say much out loud before Prescott, who was known to be Tressamer's friend; but they whispered together, and the tenor of their whispers was precisely that of Prescott's own reflections.

So anxious did Prescott feel, that he at last resolved to bare his own feelings to his friend in the hope of thereby sobering him. He accordingly went up to his bedroom, where he found him with his head in a basin of water, and addressed him in very grave accents:

"George, you must listen to me. You have told me that you love Eleanor Owen, and, I suppose, as she has you to defend her, that she returns your love. Now, I have a confession to make to you. I love her, too."

"What! You, Charles!"

"Yes. You know I saw something of her as a child. I was fond of her then, I recollect. But to-day, when I saw her, so beautiful, so innocent, in that dreadful place, I found another feeling overmastering me. Oh, do not be afraid! She shall never know it. I shall not try to take her from you. I am not the sort of man to rob his friend. But, George, let me say this to you: that if anything—oh, the thought is horrible!—if any miscarriage of justice should occur, I shall blame you. I shall never forgive you if she comes to harm through your means. Be careful. Oh, great Heaven, man, do your best, your very best! It is the crisis of our lives—of all our lives. Beware how you fail to prove yourself worthy of your trust." And without waiting for an answer he turned away, and hastened back to his own work in the Nisi Prius Court.

In spite of the confident opinions expressed by the barristers, the judge's mind was less firmly settled than they supposed. Sir Daniel Buller was in the judges' private room at the court-house, sharing a dish of cutlets with Sir John Wiseman. Of course, they were discussing the case.

"I tell you what it is, Wiseman," the first judge was saying, "there is something in this case that hasn't come out yet. So far, there has been absolutely no real defence."

"You know, if that man who's defending her—what's his name: Tressamer?—thinks he's going to get off by attacking Lewis, he makes a mistake. I shall go for him if he tries it on."

"Most improper—most improper," assented Sir John. "I don't know what the Bar's coming to, I don't indeed! These young men are throwing over all the old traditions. The judges will really have to do something."

"You see, Lewis has acted a perfectly natural and straightforward part. He was bound to do what he did."

"I suppose you'll sum up for a conviction, then?" questioned the other judge, as he rose and put on his wig.

"No, I shan't," said Sir Daniel, helping his brother on with the purple-coloured garment which is worn in presiding over the civil court. "I shall just leave it to the jury. I don't feel a bit satisfied, and I'm very glad, for once in my life, that I have got a jury to take the decision off my shoulders."

And with these words he drew his own scarlet gown around him, and, grasping a small square piece of silk in his left hand, strode back to his seat in court.

At his entrance the whole assemblage rose, including the prisoner, who had been brought back a minute before. Then a start of horror ran through them, and Eleanor's calmness for a moment gave way in a faint gasp. For the object which the judge had just laid on the desk beside him was—the Black Cap.

(To be continued.)

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A STORY WITHOUT WORDS.—AN OFFER OF £10.

BELOW are given six sketches in their proper order. £5 is offered to the reader who sends us the most appropriate wording to go under each sketch, the whole to form a story descriptive of the illustrations, and £1 will be given to each of the senders of the next best five attempts. These competitions will alternate with the Jumbled Story competitions, at all events for a short time.

It is not necessary for competitors to have any literary ability. If you have a good idea, surely there should be no difficulty in putting it down in words. The whole of the story is limited to one hundred words, which may be distributed under the sketches according to the judgment of the competitor.

All that you have to do is to put down the number of the sketch, write alongside it the wording that you think most appropriate, inclose your attempt in an envelope (which should be marked "Picture Story"), and forward it to this office before Monday, January 18th.

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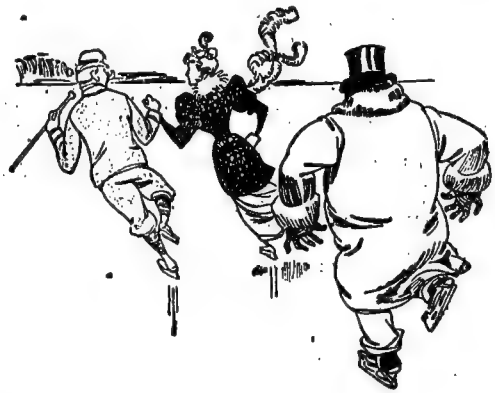

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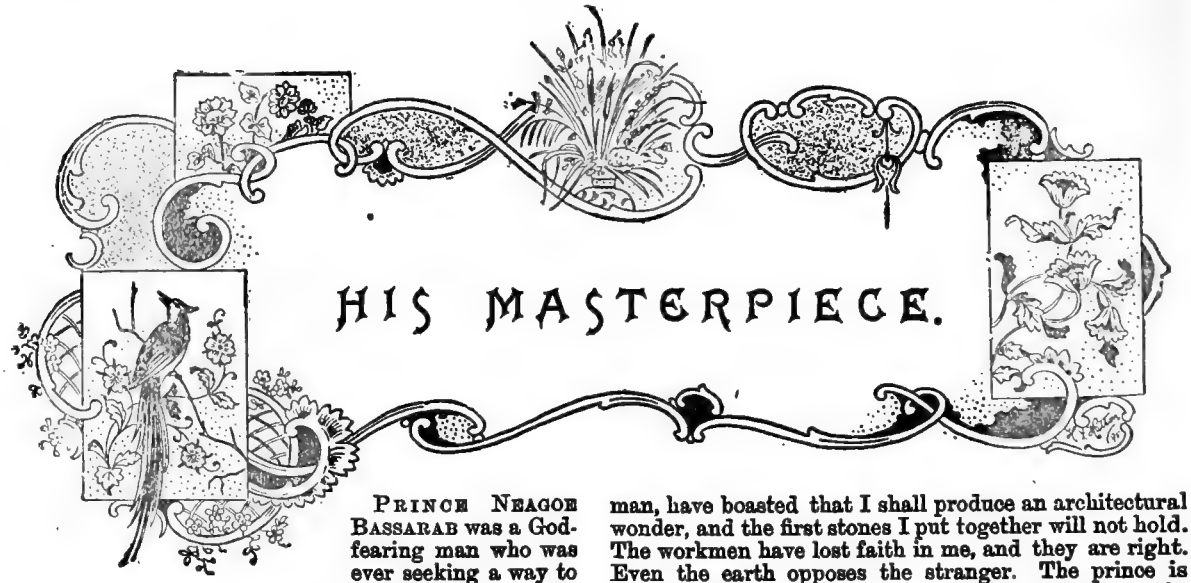

HIS MASTERPIECE.

Prince Neagoe Bassarab was a God-fearing man who was ever seeking a way to display his piety. He had built the churches of St. George, and the Metropolitan in Tergovischta, and the wondrously beautiful cloisters of Cosia and Tismana, the latter upon a rocky peak from which a cataract fell, and yet he deemed that he had not done enough. He longed to erect at Curtea de Argisch a church like no other in the world. He sent far and near for architects noted for their skill and originality to undertake the work.

Among them was a man named Manola. Some say that he came from Macedonia; others, that he was a Spaniard. He promised the prince to delight his eyes with a structure that in its harmonious union of Byzantine, Arabic and Persian architecture should be of unsurpassed loveliness. He chose the labourers that seemed to him most skilful, and began his work with infinite joy and zest, for he felt that his power was ripe, and that he was master of his art. But it was as if some evil spirit opposed him. No matter how deep the foundations were laid streams of water would gush forth, loosen the soil, and displace the stones. Daily they found the sand, but recently removed, had drifted back, and daily the walls had to be torn down and built anew. And when Manola, after working and thinking all day, left the place at evening with moist forehead and puckered brows, he knew in what condition he should find it on the morrow.

The labourers began to murmur, and were loth to work, saying that the spot was accursed and that a church would never be erected there. Manola had as much trouble with the grumbling men as with the refractory ground. Many a long night would he toss to and fro upon his bed in painful thought, then spring up and shed bitter tears. His sweet young wife, Anna, would also rise and gaze at him anxiously with her large, doe-like eyes.

"Tell me your thoughts, beloved. It makes me sad when you suffer and say nothing to me."

Manola drew her to his side, stroked her little hand, and bent his glance upon the ground, while she sought to read his sorrow from his countenance..

"I have been too arrogant. I, an alien and unknown man, have boasted that I shall produce an architectural wonder, and the first stones I put together will not hold. The workmen have lost faith in me, and they are right. Even the earth opposes the stranger. The prince is wasting his money, and 'tis said that he has angrily intimated as much. From every side enemies and envious people spring up who reproach the prince for having trusted me. I have won only shame where I hoped for fame. I know that it is childish, Anna, but sometimes I am infected with the belief of the people that the spot is bewitched."

Heavy sighs escaped his bosom, and he stared before him like one whose brain is in torment.

"Oh, what can I do? What can I suggest?" cried the young wife.

"You!" said Manola bitterly. "What can you, frail child, do where we men with wisdom and strong arms are helpless?"

He sprang up and strode restlessly up and down the small room like a caged lion the whole night. And so for many nights. Anna burned many a taper before the Virgin to win her aid, but in vain. The work did not advance. Manola became gloomier every day, until the labourers began to fear him. At last one of them mustered the courage to say:

"Master, there is an old superstition in our country, that has often proved true. If a building will not stand, a living person must be placed at the foundation, then will it last for eternity."

The workmen surrounded Manola, eagerly awaiting his reply to this daring speech. He stared at them, and the veins upon his temples swelled.

"And whom would you place there?" he finally asked.

The men glanced at one another.

"It must be one who knows nothing of it," they answered.

"But whom?"

"Master, at noon our wives, sisters, and daughters come to bring us food. Let it be one of them."

"And who will offer his?" asked Manola looking at them with the flaming eyes that they had learnt to fear.

They were silent.

"Well, who?" he queried again.

"The first who comes," came at last timidly from the circle.

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"Well," cried Manola, "then swear!" He raised his hand. "Then swear: The first who comes, no matter whose wife, sister, or daughter she may be, shall without delay or murmur be immured!"

"We swear!" whispered the men.

The sun seemed to mount so rapidly to the zenith that day, and many an eye glanced first towards heaven then into the distance. Not a word was spoken. The men's hearts trembled.

Manola had long stood with downcast eyes, brooding darkly. Now he looked up, and felt his blood congealing. There through the sunshine came a slender form in snow-white raiment; from her dark hair there floated a filmy veil; upon her shoulder she bore a pitcher, within her hand, a basket. 'Twas Anna, his young wife.

"Oh, Heaven!" he prayed, "hast Thou wholly forsaken me? Thou hast indeed punished my arrogance. Release me from my oath! I cannot do this thing! Bid me not sacrifice my young wife, all that I can call my own in this strange land, my happiness, my life! Send a tempest that she may come no further!"

As he stood upon the scaffold and prayed, he felt that all eyes were turned coldly upon him, and he knew that he would be made to keep his oath.

Then the heavens darkened. From greenish-black clouds came peals of sullen thunder and vivid sheets of lightning. There was a roaring and quaking as though the world was in its death struggle. A wind arose that bowed the mightiest trees and stripped them of their foliage. The men knelt and made the sign of the cross, but the young wife came calmly on, heeding not the tempest. She saw Manola's figure upon the scaffold outlined against the black, lightning-streaked sky, and she hastened her steps towards him.

"Heaven!" pleaded he, "now she has reached the brook, cause it to overflow that she may not cross it!"

And see, a rain descends as if the firmament had opened and every cloud had poured its contents upon the earth. Anna came nearer. And the brook swelled and foamed wildly. Not even a horse could swim across it. For a moment the whole landscape was hidden by the veil of rain. Manola clutched a beam and strove to pierce the vapour with his eager glance. Then all was still; the sun shone forth, and look! Anna has taken off her shoes, tucked up her gown, and is wading through the roaring flood. Manola stood motionless. His lips were white beneath his dark moustache as the men who gazed dumbly up at him could see.

The young wife was now but a few steps away, and she nodded and smiled to him who stood aloft, and in whose dark eyes lay the thought: "I had rather the stream had swallowed you than you should suffer this agony!" He descended the scaffold, took from her the basket and pitcher, and chided her laughingly for coming out in such weather. She noted a faint quiver in his voice, and asked if the work were spoiled again.

"Come down and see for yourself what was ruined over night. We are no farther now than we were yesterday evening."

She went down and viewed with troubled face the pools of water, the heaved-up earth, the displaced stones. Meanwhile Manola gave a signal and the masons began their work.

"Oh," said Anna, "I am in the way here. You must help me, husband, it is so high." And blushingly she extended her hand. He took it not.

"Stay down there a little longer, sweetheart. You can then see how quickly the men work. Besides, they have a fancy that the glance of your lovely eyes will make the wall stronger."

The stones had reached her knees. She looked on smilingly. Now they were up to her waist.

"Manola," she cried, "now you must lift me, for I cannot get out of here by myself."

"Yes, my love, when it is time. Just one more moment."

"Manola! The stones crush me. Manola!"

"Soon, soon it will be finished," and with his own hand he laid stone upon stone, and urged the men to work faster.

"Manola, the stones hurt me. Let them not build any more."

But he answered not.

"Manola, let them not cover my mouth and eyes! I am so frightened. Manola, where are you? Why don't you speak? Oh, jest not so cruelly! It will cost me my life! Manola! Manola!"

Just then they laid the last stone over the pretty young head. But the master made them work on and on. Noonday was long past, but no one thought of food. Naught was heard save impatient calls for brick and lime.

Lower sank the sun, yet higher rose the wall. The master swung his trowel with feverish hand and bent forward whenever the cry, "Manola!" came fainter and fainter from below. At last the workmen threw down their tools and declared they would not raise another stone. Night fell. Manola went not home. Like a ghost he wandered to and fro upon the scaffold which reared its black rafters to heaven against the moonlit landscape. Then he strode through the fields, but a spell

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seemed to draw him back to the building-place. He did not want to listen, yet he did so, and heard her still calling. There, silvery, cool, and still, flowed the Argesch. Surely its waters ought to wash away the sounds that tortured him so. He disrobed and stepped into the river, holding his head long beneath its dimpled waves. The water hushed the sounds. But scarcely had he ascended the bank ere he heard the calling again.

Months passed. The church with its five domes and richly decorated walls began to be a marvel of beauty. Then the work thereon ceased, for there was no money at hand. Manola raged. One passion yet lived in him, ambition, the consuming ambition to which he had sacrificed everything. No money!

Prince Neagoe assembled his councillors and asked them to levy additional taxes. But they shook their heads and said the country could bear no more. And was that structure, the glory of his reign, the ornament of his kingdom, to remain unfinished?

Just then the door opened and there entered in all her grandeur and loveliness the Princess Despina, robed in white satin, a mantle of blue brocade, edged with rich sable, clasped round her snowy throat. Over it rippled her soft brown hair almost to her feet. Upon her head was a cap of sable, from which to-day the diamonds were missing. No bracelets, necklets, or earrings were visible, but a silken veil fell like a spider's web over her slender form. In her hands she bore a casket containing all her jewels, which she emptied before the prince. "Take these and complete the church, else shall they be bedewed with the tears of women whose children are suffering from want." And she was gone ere the astonished men could reply.

The church was finished. Rightly was it called a wonderful structure. Each stone was carved and painted to represent a flower upon a golden ground, and no blossom was like another. The domes, the crosses, and the chains which held the crosses in place gleamed with gold—like the sun itself. Around the roof were golden doves that held tiny bells in their bills, and every zephyr made these peal with marvellous sweetness.

But Prince Neagoe, who so ardently wished to see the church completed, and his faithful Despina who had given all her possessions for it, had long closed their eyes upon the world, and their successor, Radu, was a cruel man.

All the scaffolds were removed except one small ladder by which the Prince ascended to the roof to view closely every detail of the superb work. Manola listened silently to the praise bestowed upon him. Even the cheers of the admiring multitude brought no smile to his face. His eyes burnt and glistened from nights of wakefulness and feverish thoughts. Prince Radu had seen everything.

"Well, Manola," said he at last, "would you pledge yourself to build a second church like this?"

"Certainly," answered the master. "The second should be a thousand times more beautiful. Now I realise my power." His face lighted up as he saw in his mind his next splendid work.

"In order that that shall not happen," said the Prince, "you shall abide up here, my excellent master. Your men shall destroy the ladder as soon as I descend. I would not part the master from his work."

Manola stood speechless upon the shining roof. From the vast multitude that a few moments ago shouted his praises arose no word of remonstrance. No hand was raised to rescue him. On the contrary they began to mutter: "The Prince is right. The master is in league with the devil. He walled up his wife with his own hand. He deserves the punishment."

Even his own workmen said: "We would not have done it. He forced us to take an oath. He helped wall her in, the poor woman. And she cried to him so piteously. He is a cruel, wicked man. Has he given us a kind word since that day? And it is to us that he owes the completion of this building. Let him starve up there. He deserves nothing better."

Not one pleaded for him. All gazed up with abhorrence at the man who had begun his great work in sin that would now be punished with death. But he stood with folded arms and saw the ladder removed; saw the people follow the prince who mocked him as he left the place.

He stood thus when night fell, and thought of his whole life; his boundless ambition to which he had sacrificed his happiness, his love, the only being in this wide, unfriendly world that he could call his own. Then there seemed to ring faintly from below the voice of his beautiful wife: "Manola! Manola!" Still the same sound that had haunted him so many nights and robbed him of sleep.

The night was sultry and there was no dew; like a flaming disc the sun rose and poured glowing rays upon the golden roof. All around the grass withered. Over the marsh hung a bluish, ghostly light. The Argesch seemed to have ceased to flow. Not even a gnat stirred in the hot air. Hunger began to gnaw, and thirst parched the lips and throat. The next night there was again no dew. Not the slightest moisture lay upon the roof. A marble stillness was upon everything.

On the second day Manola's brain grew giddier and giddier, and he heard Anna's voice louder and clearer calling him as she did in life, and as if she would appear before him the next moment.

Another long night during which his mind was darkened by fever. He tottered to and fro upon the roof, and wherever he looked he beheld Anna beckoning to him.

At dawn a soft wind arose, and all the bells began to peal. To the starving man they sounded like the voice of his wife. He reeled to the roof's edge, and with the cry: "I'm coming! yes, I am coming to you!" cast himself off. Where he fell there sprang up a fountain, but the water was salty, like endlessly flowing tears.

Fred Potter.

GET YOUR WIFE TO SIGN THIS.

Permit.

This is to certify that I....., the legally wedded wife of....., in consideration of his purchasing for me a copy of *Home Notes*, do hereby permit him to go where he pleases, and to drink what, and when he pleases. I furthermore authorise him to carry and use a latch-key, and to have and enjoy all the privileges and immunities usually conferred by the latch-key aforesaid. I want him to enjoy life while he is with us, as he will be a long time dead.

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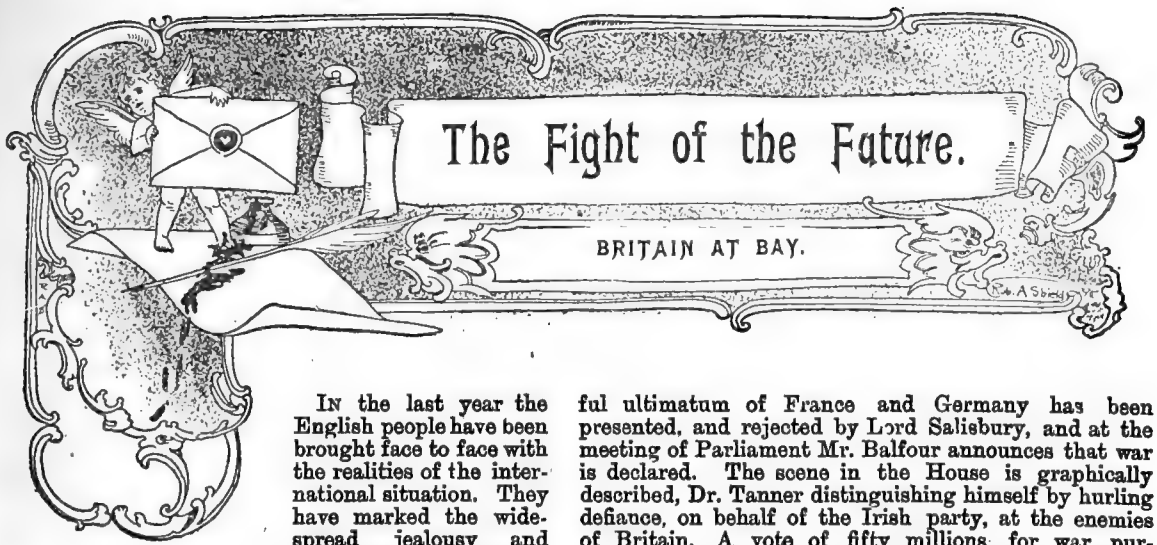

The Fight of the Future.

BRITAIN AT BAY.

IN the last year the English people have been brought face to face with the realities of the international situation. They have marked the widespread jealousy and suspicion of Great Britain entertained abroad, and they have had to reckon up the possibilities and the consequences of a combination of the whole of Europe in arms against her. The present is therefore the "psychological moment" for a revival of those stories of the Great War to Come, several of which were published a few years ago; and Mr. Louis Tracy has shown his journalistic acumen by compiling another on the same subject. His spirited book on "The Final War" is one of the most exciting ever read.

In it he makes Great Britain confront the world in arms; and if the defect of his narrative is that he takes a view rather *couleur de rose* of the victorious progress of the British arms, his remarkable grasp of detail and strategic ingenuity enable him to put before us such a vivid and moving picture of a European war by land and sea that the interest of the reader is enchained from first to last.

We begin with a cloudless sky. A ball is being held at the British Embassy in Paris; everything is tranquil, peaceful, serene, to the public and outward view. The Ambassador and one or two attachés have had their suspicions that something was "in the air." But it is only when the official representatives of France and Germany make excuses for a hurried departure that the Ambassador makes up his mind that his apprehensions are right, and sends an aide-de-camp post-haste to catch a train to Italy in order to send a secret message to the Mediterranean fleet.

Meanwhile, at Versailles, there is a meeting of M. Faure, General Caprivi, M. Hanotaux, and Count Holbach, with General Gourko representing Russia. Their plan is unfolded. On the morrow war is to be declared against Great Britain by France and Germany. Preparations have been made for months past to invade England, and everything is in readiness to take the British Government napping and to smash the British Empire at one blow. Canada is to fall to France. East Africa to Germany, and the other colonies to be divided; while England is to be governed by a military council. Russia claims India and Turkey as the price of non-interference, while Germany demands Belgium and offers to give Alsace-Lorraine to France.

Next day all England is in commotion. The shameful ultimatum of France and Germany has been presented, and rejected by Lord Salisbury, and at the meeting of Parliament Mr. Balfour announces that war is declared. The scene in the House is graphically described, Dr. Tanner distinguishing himself by hurling defiance, on behalf of the Irish party, at the enemies of Britain. A vote of fifty millions for war purposes is passed, and a Council of National Safety, composed of the leaders of both parties, including Mr. Gladstone, is appointed.

Meanwhile every British cable has been cut by the enemy and England is really "isolated," the cables with the United States alone remaining intact. But the news spreads at once through the country of the imminent danger, and all is enthusiasm and indignation. At five o'clock that afternoon, May 3rd, 1898—that is Mr. Tracy's date—a vast fleet, with transports carrying 150,000 men is sighted off Worthing, but Lord Wolseley's measures have been taken with all speed.

The South-coast railways had engaged to deliver 20,000 men by nine o'clock, and fifty Maxims were to be on the sea-front by 7.30 p.m.; while Lord Charles Beresford, in command of the Channel Squadron, was steaming hard for Spithead and would arrive at eleven.

But meanwhile the enemy are trying to land. This is the opportunity for local patriotism and discipline. The Mayor of Worthing, at the head of the local volunteers, occupies the shore and performs prodigies of valour. One landing-party is repulsed, though at great cost, and another; and resistance is effectually prolonged until the troops from Aldershot dash up under Sir Evelyn Wood and compel the boats to seek the shelter of the war-ships' guns.

Worthing is bombarded, but the shore of England is still safe. At ten o'clock another and fiercer attempt is made to land; but before it can be successful a sudden outburst of big guns from the sea, a series of tremendous crashings and explosions, and a rapid diversion of the search-lights towards the south causes an immediate cessation of firing from both sides; the British fleet has arrived upon the scene.

The Channel Squadron consists of only nine battleships, for all the most powerful ships in the navy are in the Mediterranean, in China, in North America, Australasia, and the Cape; and it has to face a fleet of thirty-six armour-clads—an appalling disproportion. But Lord Charles Beresford's object is first and foremost to destroy the transports and so save the land army, and his orders are to risk everything for that.

Aided by the surprise with which they come to the attack, the British fleet does frightful havoc. It is the

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fiercest fight in history. In a few minutes the transports and their human freight and munitions of war are swept away into the deep waters of the Channel; and while the English fleet is utterly destroyed, it is accompanied by seventeen of the enemy's battle-ships, while the rest are so crippled that they have to steam as best they can away. Many extraordinary deeds of valour are done, and Lord Charles Beresford just manages to run the *Magnificent* ashore and save her from sinking.

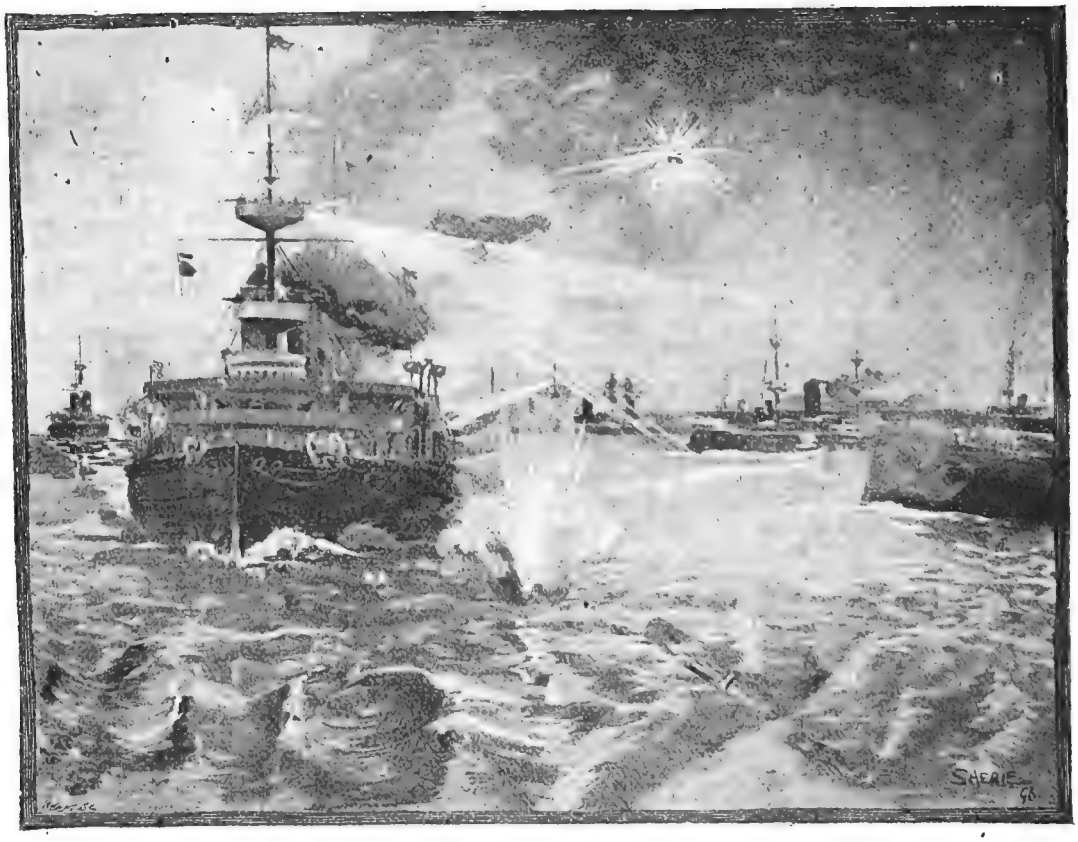
This defeat of the Armada puts England into a wild ferment of joy and enthusiastic loyalty. The first-class army reserve has been called out, and the militia and volunteers are mobilised. Ireland, Scotland, and Wales rise like one man. It is promptly announced that two expeditionary forces are to be landed on the shores of France and Germany. The Duke of Connaught and the Duke of York take their places with the expeditionary army; Lord Roberts commanding the attack on France and Sir Evelyn Wood against Germany.

Meanwhile events have happened in the Mediterranean. A brave lieutenant from Malta has got ahead of the French and German ships which were proceeding *viâ* the Suez Canal to occupy Aden and Perim; he dashes off on a torpedo-boat and blows up the Canal; while Sir Michael Culme-Seymour, with the fleet, waits at Gibraltar for the French and German battle-ships, which are moving out of the Mediterranean to join the attack on the British coasts.

It was imperative, now that England is invading France, that enough ships should get safely through the Straits and away to Brest to resist any such movement by sea. Sir Michael Culme-Seymour has a fleet of seventeen battle-ships and cruisers, while the allied fleet has eighteen battle-ships alone and twenty-one cruisers. But the British Admiral has Gibraltar at his back, with its hundred-ton gun; and he manœuvres so that the enemy's battle-ships are compelled to come within its range. The colossal cannon sinks four ironclads and then bursts, but by that time so much damage has been done to Amiral de Monthier's fleet that he surrenders.

In England a great army has been organised. A proclamation is made laying stress on the necessity of answering the attack made by France and Germany. They had tried to destroy the Empire, and danger would not be over until they had been taught a lesson by the occupation of Paris or Berlin, or both. But France and Germany could put six million men in the field; Great Britain has only half a million.

Another half million of volunteers are called for, and a reserve of three millions for reinforcements, Sir Redvers Buller being charged with the work of mobilisation. And simultaneously Lord Roberts and the Duke of York take the field against France, beginning with the capture of Havre; and Sir Evelyn Wood and the Duke of Connaught, supported by a fleet under Sir Nowell Salmon, make for the Kiel Canal with the secret object of occupying Strahlsund.



It is the fiercest fight in history.

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Mr. Tracy describes both operations with great spirit; the capture of Havre, and the occupation of Strahlsund are successfully effected after some brilliant fighting. The result is that the active aid of Russia has to be sought, and the Tsar is induced to join the alliance and to send a fleet against Britain.

An unexpected consequence follows. The United States has been divided in opinion about the war, and the President had announced, though rather against the sympathies of the nation and of Wall Street, which inclined to England's side, that strict neutrality would be observed. Admiral Mahan is sent with a fleet to protect American commerce.

Admiral Mahan was personally all on the side of Great Britain, and he thought that the American people were the same; and when he meets Admiral Erskine with the North American squadron in mid-Atlantic, and hears that there is a possibility of Russia joining the coalition, he makes up his mind that his next instructions must be to join Great Britain if Russia sides against her. On he sails for Cardiff; and while the American ships are in port the Russian fleet also heaves to and sends an ultimatum to the mayor.

At such a crisis it does not suit Admiral Mahan's book to wait for a reversal of his present orders from his Government. The gallant American warns the Russian Admiral that he wants time to secure the safety of the American ships in harbour; and this notice being received with neglect, he promptly fights the Russian fleet and beats them out to sea; when they surrender unwittingly to Admiral Erskine, who is just arriving with battered ships after a successful but disastrous engagement with an allied fleet in the Atlantic.

Mahan is angrily remonstrated with by Mr. Bayard, the U.S.A. Minister for intervening; but a telegram from Washington announcing an American declaration of war against Russia and the allies, promptly put matters right. Henceforth the United States vie with Great Britain in prosecuting the war, and great feats of swift organisation, beating all records, are accomplished by American officers and men; America sends a large force to Strahlsund under General Miles, and the two countries hail with fervour the Anglo-Saxon alliance. England responds at once by drinking "corpse revivers" instead of the usual whisky-and-soda.

The further conduct of the campaigns in Germany and France must be read in Mr. Tracy's book. But this is not all that Great Britain can do. From India another great army is led against Russia. The expedition is excitingly described; the battle in Afghanistan in which the Russian Central Asian army is defeated, and the subsequent march on Moscow, being the occasion of some very vivid writing, with many incidents of heroism and pathos. The attack on Russia is assisted by a revolution within the empire on the part of the Nihilists, by which the Romanoff dynasty is overthrown. Eventually the British and American arms are victorious. Paris is taken, and the German Emperor accepts terms dictated by the Prince of Wales.

Some of the best hits of the book concern the German Emperor, whose little weaknesses, for lecturing on all subjects and for telegraphing when a chance offers, are cleverly taken off. Perhaps the neatest hit of all is the way in which Mr. Tracy makes Dr. Jameson bring off another raid and take the Emperor prisoner, thus settling an old score. A heap of other well-known men are also brought on the scene, and characteristic speeches put into the mouth of each. And as if the military interest of the narrative were not sufficient, two love-stories meander through it, connected with two of the bravest of the British fighting-men. Indeed, so full of incident is the book, and so lively in style, that once taken up, it is very hard to put down until it is finished.—From the *St. James' s Gazette.*

THE ESPOUSALS.

When the little Princess Othilde came into the world, the sight of her provoked unanimous cries of admiration and surprise; of admiration because she was indeed the sweetest, loveliest thing imaginable, and of surprise because she was hardly as large as the closed fist of a child!

As she lay there in her cradle no wider than your hand and no longer than your finger, you would have taken her for a humming bird, still featherless, in its snug little nest. The King and Queen never wearied of admiring her little legs and rosy feet not too large for a doll's stocking, her tiny body resembling a white mouse, and her face that the petal of a daisy could have hidden.

To be sure they were not a little alarmed at her diminutive size, and their royal dignity was somewhat ruffled at the thought of having given birth to the smallest dwarf ever seen, but they hoped their daughter would grow without losing any of her attractiveness.

They were sorely disappointed in their expectations.

While she retained all the airy grace you might wish to see, the tiny Princess grew so slowly that at the age of five she was no taller than a blade of grass—and she had to stand on tiptoe to pluck a violet, while playing on the lawns in the park.

Learned physicians were sent for and the costliest presents promised them if they could only make Othilde grow a few inches. They held mysterious consultations—crossed their hands on their fat bodies—winked knowingly from behind their glasses, invented nasty drugs that poor little Othilde had to swallow, and miraculous salves with which she was to be rubbed night and day. But all to no purpose whatever. Othilde continued to be the loveliest little dwarf, and when she played and romped with her favourite dog, as large as a new-born kitten, she could pass between its fore-legs without stooping.

The King and Queen, greatly perplexed, applied to the fairies, with whom they had ever been on excellent terms, and who hastened to the rescue: some reclining in litters of cloth of gold fringed with diamonds and rubies, borne by African slaves—others in chariots of the purest crystal drawn by four milk-white unicorns with manes

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of fire—while some found it more convenient to enter through the windows or down the chimneys in the shape of beautiful birds of paradise or of swift martins with purple wings. As soon as they touched the palace floor, however, they changed into lovely ladies dressed in silk and satin. One after the other they touched Othilde with their wands, took her up in their hands—for she was no heavier than a good-sized lark—kissed her, breathed on her hair, made strange signs over her, and muttered all-powerful words of magic.

Alas! the charms of the fairies proved as useless as the drugs of the learned men! At sixteen the Princess was still so small that one morning she chanced to be caught in a trap for nightingales, that had been set in the park.

The courtiers, whose interest it always is to cheer up their sovereigns for the reason that good humour tends to liberality, did their best to console the King and Queen. They declared that nothing was more ridiculous than a large stature, and that all tall persons were nothing but deformities. As for themselves, they said, why, they would have been enchanted to be half a foot tall—but Nature sets apart such favours for royal families alone! On seeing some tall fellow pass by they never failed to burst out laughing so as to please their sovereigns. The ladies-in-waiting of one accord gave up wearing high heels, which were then in fashion, so that the Princess might appear less diminutive beside them, and the chamberlains adopted the habit of never approaching the throne except on their knees.

This ingenious flattery did not always succeed in consoling the King and Queen. They often felt inclined to weep when they kissed their tiny speck of a daughter and hardly dared to touch her with the tips of their lips for fear of swallowing her up. And they kept back their tears, trembling, lest the mite should get soaked and die of a cold! As for Othilde she seemed not in the least distressed about her size, and took the greatest pleasure in admiring her small self in a hand-mirror made out of a single rather large diamond.

But habit wears out the most painful afflictions, and the King and Queen lost their sadness somewhat, and would doubtless have resolved not to grieve more in such a hopeless case—if something had not happened to renew their sorrow. The young Emperor of Sirinagor had heard so many accounts of the Princess's wonderful beauty that he fell deeply in love with her and dispatched certain ambassadors to ask her in marriage. You know that Fame, with the hundred trumpets, willingly flatters royal persons, and in this instance had divulged Othilde's charm and beauty without mentioning her size. The embarrassment that such a demand produced at the royal court can easily be imagined. It was out of the question to marry this dainty doll—no larger than a bird—to a prince of usual stature.

But the young Emperor's suit was the more preposterous as he was himself of an enormous height—being far more beautiful than any living prince, and taller than any giant. When he was born it had been impossible to find a cradle large enough to hold the huge baby, and they were obliged to stretch him out on some carpets in the throne room. At the age of three he had to stoop somewhat in hunting for birds' eggs on the topmost branch of oak. His parents, like those of little Othilde, had consulted doctors and fairies, but to no avail, for he had grown on and on in an excessive manner. When his subjects celebrated a victory and erected triumphal arches for their young prince, he was compelled to alight from his horse to pass under them, and no matter how high they might be, he never failed to strike the frontals with his helmet, on which was fastened a silver bird with outstretched wings.

Naturally, the King and Queen declared to the disappointed ambassadors that such a match was the most impossible thing in the world. But the young Emperor, who possessed a very fiery and warlike temperament, was by no means satisfied with the reply—he flatly refused to listen to reason—and the confession of Othilde's small size seemed to him an absurb excuse, invented to contradict his wishes. He put on his helmet in great wrath, making the silver wings tremble, and swore that he would avenge himself of such an insult by putting the entire country to fire and sword. He acted accordingly. Terrible battles were fought, towns were sacked, and whole nations were slaughtered.

Finally the King and Queen understood that they too would perish as well as their entire kingdom if they did not come to an understanding with the gigantic conqueror who was rapidly striding over burning forests and villages! They hastened therefore to offer him peace and solemnly promised to give him their daughter in marriage. A day was appointed for the meeting of the two lovers—it had to take place in the park for the conqueror would never have been able to stand up in the palace halls.

"Well," he said; "I do not see the Princess—will she not be here soon?"

"Look down at your feet," answered the King. And there she was, sure enough, hardly any higher than the flower-beds—so tiny and so fair in her dress of gold, her brow sparkling with gems! She appeared smaller still by the side of the magnificent young Emperor, whose armour gleamed and shone in the sunbeams.

"Alas!" he sighed—for he was much distressed at discovering her down there at his feet, so lovely and so tiny.

"Alas!" said the little Princess, for she too was very sad on seeing him up there so far off—so handsome and so tall! And they had tears—she in her uplifted eyes, he in his downcast eyes. But even as they looked at each other she was growing taller and taller and he was rapidly shrinking. Love, more powerful than the fairies, had united them. Presently they were almost of the same height, and their hands touched—like two lovely roses on one stem.

JESSIE ROGERS.

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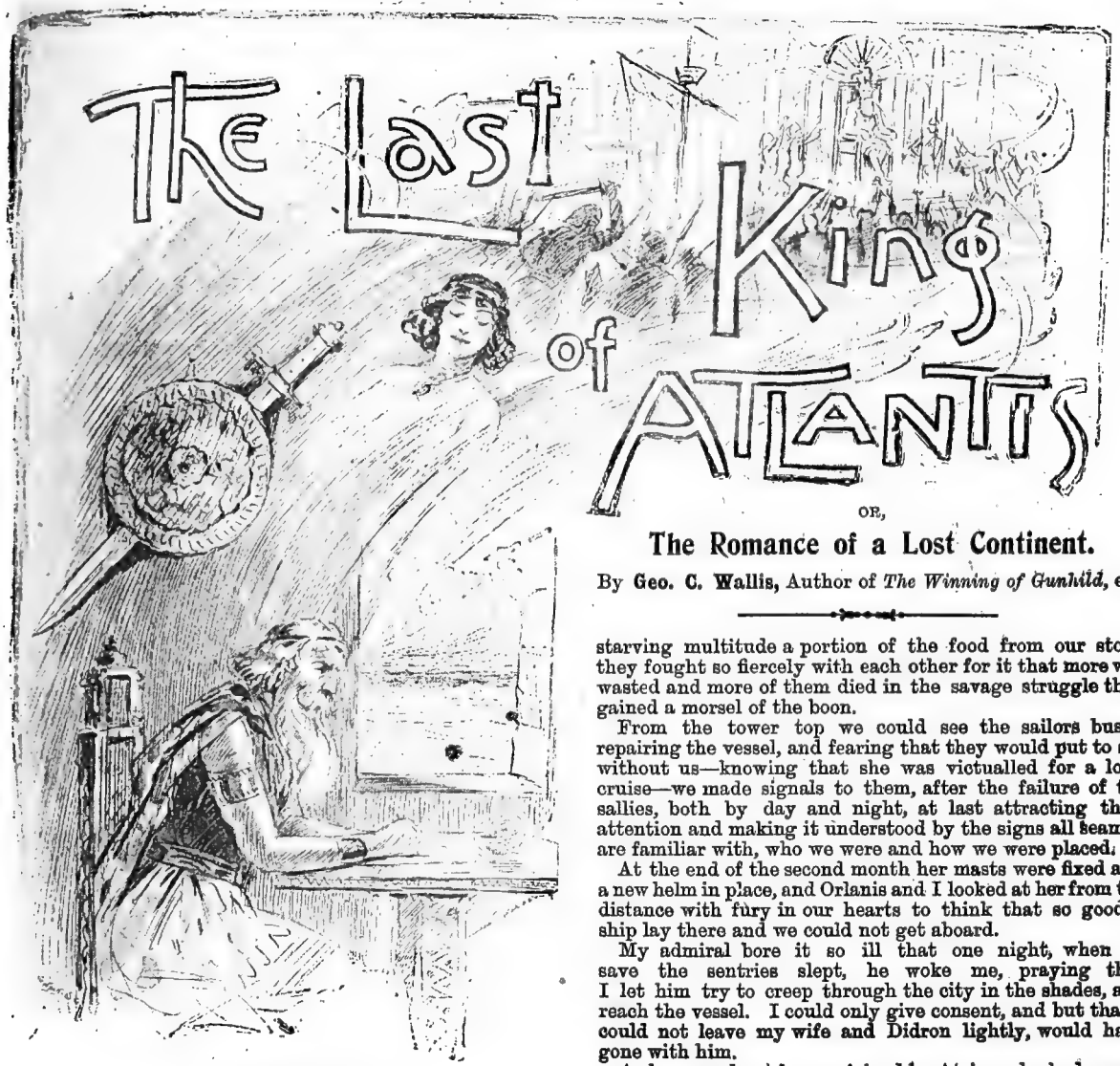

OR,

The Romance of a Lost Continent.

By **Geo. C. Wallis,** Author of *The Winning of Gunhild,* etc.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE END OF ATLANTIS.

I HAVE said that we purposed repairing the *Ravager* and, in her, quitting this luckless land. It was easy to propose and lay our plans, but not so easy to accomplish them. Penares, with fifty men, made an effort to reach the ship and tell our plight to the seventy sailors left on board: and after a day's striving, was compelled to return with only half his band.

Once I set out, with two hundred of the oldest and best-trained warriors in our little garrison, and we fought our way for half the distance with almost superhuman energy. There, however, we were stopped by huge barricades piled across the tortuous way, and the incessant attacks of the swarming mob of madmen, till, weary and hopeless, we had perforce to retreat, leaving some eighty of our friends upon the scene of combat. It grieved me sorely to draw blade anew on my own countrymen, yet there was no help for it, so lost were they to all sense of order.

When I tried to talk with them they answered only with defiant yells of rage, and when in our pity we gave the starving multitude a portion of the food from our store, they fought so fiercely with each other for it that more was wasted and more of them died in the savage struggle than gained a morsel of the boon.

From the tower top we could see the sailors busily repairing the vessel, and fearing that they would put to sea without us—knowing that she was victualled for a long cruise—we made signals to them, after the failure of the sallies, both by day and night, at last attracting their attention and making it understood by the signs all seamen are familiar with, who we were and how we were placed.

At the end of the second month her masts were fixed and a new helm in place, and Orlanis and I looked at her from the distance with fury in our hearts to think that so good a ship lay there and we could not get aboard.

My admiral bore it so ill that one night, when all save the sentries slept, he woke me, praying that I let him try to creep through the city in the shades, and reach the vessel. I could only give consent, and but that I could not leave my wife and Didron lightly, would have gone with him.

As he passed out he was joined by Atris—who had grown dark and silent as the grave since the night of fear—and together they two stole into the outer darkness, threading their way with caution through the slumbering town. They met with little difficulty on their journey, being only two, and moving always in the shadow, and just as the daylight shone upon the column top, we received and answered the signal that told of their success.

Meantime, keeping pace with the famine and pestilence, and our misery and despair, the sea drew in upon the land relentlessly on all sides, lessening the shelving margin of the doomed country until the northern shore was within a half-day's journey, and the southern portion of the city, including the harbour, and the house and garden where Briseis had once lived, lay a fathom deep under the plashing surf, and the tide rose and fell amid the ruins of deserted dwellings.

Storms were frequent, long-lasting, and fierce, in those days of desolation; therefore, you may imagine the sudden chill of fear which smote me when going, as was my custom, to signal with the crew of the ship, I saw that it was gone!

The night had been wild and dark, the shrill hurricane

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blast shrieking round our quaking column like the raging cry of a thousand demons from the lower shadows, and when, through the fresh, vigorous, rain-washed air of the morning, I saw no trace of the vessel on which all our hopes hung, I feared that the northern gale had carried her out to sea, and left her a sinking wreck.

Said Valdo, joining me on the dizzy height, and speaking at the top of his voice to be heard above the whistling of the wind:

"The clouds are still driving fast, and there is a bank of lowering dulness in the north that I like not."

"And there is something missing in the south that I am concerned with," I roared into his ear, pointing to the vacant shore.

"So there is," he shouted back with a calmness and a carelessness in his tone that I could not share; "they have but put off to escape the wreckage near the coast, and will doubtless return when the elements have worked their fury off. But hist! dost hear that low rumbling roar to the north and east?"

"And see that line of white advancing on us swifter than the rising tide? Ay," I bawled in sudden eagerness, "dost know what it portends?"

"By the God of Truth, that do I!" he cried, hurrying to the steps, down which I followed him in break-neck haste, "'tis the last sinking of the land and the last great ocean wave, helped on by wind and tide. 'Twill sweep over this fragment of dry land as over a sunken reef, and yonder wretches will be drowned like vermin in their holes!"

"Haste!" I answered as we flew down round after round of the winding stair that never seemed so long as then. "Haste! or those we love will not have time to get to the upper storeys ere the flood is on us! Haste!"

Right lustily we toiled that morning, getting our wives and children safely placed on the highest floor, then labouring with might and main to secure as much as possible of the sadly small store of grain, and to draw as much water from the well as our scanty vessels would hold.

That done, we withdrew our sentries, fastened up the doors and casements, covered down the mouth of the well, and rêtired to the upper storeys, waiting the coming of the conquering sea.

Below us, in the city and on the plain, the gaunt thousands, roused from their fitful sleep by the roar of the advancing surge, ran to and fro in new-born terror, wailing and shrieking in their madness.

Many climbed to the roofs of the houses that were still whole, whilst others clustered round the foot of the tower imploring assistance or admittance, which, of course, having regard to our own safety, we could not grant.

We had not long to wait in silent suspense before the rushing tide was boiling round us, its impact making the massive column tremble and totter with appalling violence.

It was our one thought, as we watched the inrush of the deluge from the north-east, whether the tower, with all its strength, would withstand the awful force of the raging sea; and when we felt the ground quake and the floors dance beneath our feet, all feared the worst.

But the foundations, as I have told, went deep into the earth, being built on the solid rock, and after the first contact the seething flood passed by with more of noise than danger in its passing, sweeping away the groups of famished wretches huddled together on the lee of the tower, as straws before an autumn gale.

Higher than the highest ruin in the city was the on-pouring tide, and when, bearing on its foaming crest a formidable quantity of uprooted trees and floating wreckage, the water from the northward met the rising water to the south with a sudden swirl and thunderous sound, not one of the hapless creatures at their mercy was left alive.

The water eddied fiercely for some hours after that, shaking the tower in its fury and battering the sides with the many fragments borne upon its ruffled surface, and when all was once more tolerably still, we who gazed from the upper floors of the high column were all who remained alive in the land of Atlantis.

The city, with all its burden of sorrow and sin, lay fathoms deep below the waves, and the birds of the woods and housetops could find no resting places for their feet. The tragedy of Atlantis was at last complete, and no feature was wanting of the horrors foretold by the mouth of Unim, Priest of Truth.

Amid the shrieking of the gale and the lashing of the angry waves, night settled down upon desolate expanse, and those who could sought their rough couches to drown their fears in sleep.

Three days of despair slowly passed over us, perched in our solitary tower, nothing upon the sea breaking its grey monotony save the homeless flight of the gulls, the storm-birds rising on the waves, or the swarming of the ground-sharks over the place where the city had been.

In those three days we seemed to pass a lifetime of suffering and grief, for the water gave out and the sea had crept in, filling the lower chambers, so that we could get no more.

The fell disease which had devasted Kronos was not yet gone from us, and on the weakened frames of many fastened its deadly grip with ease. On the afternoon of the third day our Didron, our one remaining child, was stricken down by the plague, and we put him to rest along with many others in the salt water that filled the lower halls.

We wept not over him as over Vesta, though our hearts were torn with equal grief, for the fountains of our tears were dry, and we said aloud that it was better that he should go before us than be left to perish of thirst at the last. So does grief seek to deceive itself.

It was on the morning of the fourth day that, having risen early to gain the solitude of the column summit, I saw a sail to windward bearing down upon the tower. Although at first it appeared no larger than a gull's wing, I soon noticed, as the ship drew nearer, the Egyptian cut of her canvas, and knew her to be the good old *Ravager*, which we all deemed lost.

With indescribable joy I watched her swift approach in the soft glimmer of the morning; nor till she came within hailing distance, and I had heard and answered the welcome shout: "The *Ravager* has come to the rescue of her King!" did I tell the glad tidings to the remnant of the faithful garrison. When I did, all was at once confusion, and many wept for joy who thought that sorrow had left them no more tears to shed.

Without delay we got aboard, taking as much food with us as the ship would carry, and easing round the helm, put off and steered from the silent, lonely tower for the far-off West.

When the mad revolt broke out in the city we numbered 400 men and 200 women and children, while the ship held seventy sailors; when we set forth on the pathless ocean for the last time our company all told was only 150 men and forty of the weaker sex and younger years, so busy had been the arrows of Amarunth.

The tale my two brave officers told was very simple. Orlanis, always an expert weather prophet, had foreseen the coming of the storm and noticed the sudden sinking of the land, and though against the wish of many others, had deemed it his duty to put out to sea.

After struggling with the tempest for three days, they got command of the ship again and so came to our relief, being themselves greatly relieved to find the tower still standing.

"I thought it cowardice to leave the shore while you were exposed to all the fury of the gale, but I am only a clumsy landsman compared to Orlanis," Atris said with the grimmest of grim smiles upon his haggard face.

"It was wise to follow his desire," I answered, and thereupon commended my captain warmly for his skill and promptness.

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But my thought hurries on to the culmination of my life story and the coming of the end, which Unim had wisely withheld from my knowledge. As the sturdy vessel ploughed her way through the western waters in the clear glow of the morning light, our faces cheered and hands sought hands in thankful tenderness.

For myself, I felt as though a weight was lifted from my mind, and I was free to end my days in peace in a foreign land, for was not life left in us at the last, and hope renewed, and love, that is stronger than life or hope, still making joy within our hearts? And were not the stout timbers of a veteran vessel creaking beneath our feet as the wind in her bellying sails bore us from the scene of the last act in the mournful history of Atlantis?

Yet scarcely had we voyaged from the sun till the watch-tower sank low on the eastern horizon, when the sharp eyes of a sailor discerned two ships fast sailing from the south towards us, one, the larger, pursuing the other and smaller, and gaining slowly but surely upon her as they drew rapidly towards the path we were steering. I seized the helm and pointed the *Ravager* so as to meet them without delay.

"'Tis as well to greet them one by one," I said to Orlanis, who stood at my side in the prow, trying to make out the vessels, "for we know not who they are, and one enemy at a time will be enough for us."

"I like not their looks at all, King," said he, "and also, I seem to know the smaller ship by sight. Mind you not once going aboard a long, low craft like that, against my desire?"

"By the Spirits, 'tis Tirhak the Pirate, whom I told to search for the ship of Listra!" I cried, motioning Valdo and Atris to me, "and now the thought is in my mind, the greater ship is like the phantom craft that I saw from the shores of Kronos on the even when the Sleeper was slain! To arms, men! and below with our wives and little ones! We have yet a fight to win ere deliverance is ours!"

"The time shall find me ready," answered briefly-spoken Atris, his hand on his sword, and a gleam of fire in his hollow eyes; and Valdo said:

"Nor shall I be wanting, whose love is the greedy blade, and whose bridal bed has ever been the field of war!"

"I have no fear for your prowess," I said, "and the pirates, once at bay, will strike while they have strength to stand; but I sorely wish our iron-beak were still at the prow, for then we should have no need to board."

The two ships, both with full spread of canvas, were still foaming on, the pirate being within a league, and the other craft but half that distance astern of her, and coming up regardless of our presence, hand over hand. She flew the selfsame flag that the rebels of Ulmeca had chosen, and we were sure now that she was the mysterious vessel of outlawed Listra, and did not wonder that Tirhak fled for Atlantis rather than fight her alone, so great was her size and swift her speed.

The *Ravager* herself could not have raced through the flying spray faster than did that cursed craft, whilst she could carry a crew at least double the number of ours.

"We shall be upon them presently," said Orlanis, "up with the Royal Banner, and let them know our reputation!"

"And pull her up short when we meet the first," I cried. "We must talk with Tirhak before aught is done."

So saying I ran below, and clasping Briseis in my arms, bade her be of good cheer, for one of the ships was a friend, and the wanton who had slain our youngest son should meet her just punishment ere the sun went down.

"Yet be not harsh, my husband, my love!" pleaded my sweet wife, encircling my neck with her white arms, and kissing me with all a maiden's sweetness. "If she will pass on without drawing weapon, so let it be, for surely blood enough has been shed in these last months. Yet if she will not, and you must strike, strike hard, and show no mercy for my sake, for I have a strange fear of this leman in my heart, and I could rest in peace did I know the salt waves plowed above her body. Think me not cruel, husband, for it may be a warning of the spirits that troubles me, but be not thou the first to provoke the strife."

"Dear one!" I cried, letting her rest for a moment in my arms, as she had done in that fair garden now under the sea, "dear one, it shall be as you wish in all things, and fear not for me in the worst, I pray, with 'Sunderer' in my hand—it is a staunch friend."

I left her then, and went on deck, but how her sweet eyes followed me till I had climbed the stepway, and was out of her sight!

Orlanis now stood at the helm, and with him my two officers and Penares. Taking my trusty blade from its sheath, I cleaned it well from the stains of rust that had gathered on it, polished it, and sharpened its matchless edge upon a piece of soft stone, moistened with oil.

As I laboured, and the ringing metal shone and sharpened in my grasp, the old war spirit crept into my soul with all its thirst for a foeman's life, and its longing for the clash of arms, and as I worked, I sang till the others caught the spirit, and grim faces flushed at thought of a coming struggle. Our prow was now level with the pirate's bow, and I hailed the long-bearded old man who stood in the stern of his ship as both banks of oars flashed out, backwatering, and we came to rest.

"Whither in such haste, old friend of Didron?"

From the gangway of his vessel the white-haired old pirate answered me, his voice still ringing full and strong.

"To Kronos, King," he said, "bringing you the ship you sought in vain!"

There was a twinkle in his eye and mirth in his voice, that made us laugh in spite of ourselves.

"Or meanest thou that yonder ship is bringing thee, my Tirhak?" I queried, pointing to Listra's craft, which was now rapidly nearing us on the larboard tack.

"There may be a leaven of truth in thy saying," returned he, "for I thought I should surely lead the enemy into a trap if I could only bring her near the coast, though it seems there is no coast as yet, and yet I could swear by all the gods that three days agone I was not two days' voyage from the shore! Canst unravel me the mystery?"

"Let us settle with the foe first," I said, cutting him short in his garrulous career, "and then we will talk of vanished coasts and sunken cities. Art willing to join us in a bout with the swift sailing craft?"

"Ay! and that without second thought!" he cried, buckling on a blade that one of his hardy men brought. "If my time has come, I could not wish to die in better company or in better fashion. It hath always been my desire to close my eyes before an enemy's face, with a sword in my hand and a shout of battle sounding in my ears. Lead on, son of Didron; thou shalt not find the pirates hang back for fear of a woman's crew!" and the burly old sea-rover, who had just deemed discretion better than rashness, put his ship about, shaking his huge fist the while at the oncoming foe.

"Seemeth as though our Princess hath a large crew aboard," muttered Valdo, "or she would not come forward so readily."

"That may be," I said; "but many or few, we shall fight her if she wants a fight, though she shall herself decide. Furl sails, Orlanis, and let us trust to our oars alone, as Tirhak is doing. Keep her head forward, and get ready the grappling chains."

Now we were within hailing distance of the strange ship, nor had I long to take note of her lines and build and admire her with a sailor's critical eye, when in calm, clear tones that I remembered well, this greeting came across the water:

"Welcome, Arnon of Atlantis, Macis of Thinæ, deserter and traitor, welcome!"

There was deep sarcasm and contempt in the words and the manner in which they were spoken, there was deeper

scorn and blacker hate in the face of the beautiful fury who uttered them.

The ship was tearing towards us through the water like a living thing, the white spray rising before her sharp curved prow like a fountain of foam, and the erst Princess stood near the helm, the keen wind casting her flying draperies behind her and tinging her cheeks with freshest red as she called her mocking salute and ill-concealed challenge to us.

For answer I would have sent her a shower of arrows and leaden bullets; but, remembering my weakness before her wanton charms and my promise to Briseis, I replied, fitting a shaft in my bow meantime—a shaft with her name graven upon it:

"Greeting, Listra! Welcome to Atlantis, from whence you have so long been a stranger, though rumour has it that you paid us a visit once in the night, when none could see your face and be captivated with its beauty. As you wish to land again, the way is free, and I will not make effort to put off your visit."

"Art turned into a weakling, or in thy second youth?" asked the fair rebel, laughing an evil laugh to her crew; "thou, Macis the Fearless, Arnon the Iron-fingered and the Iron-hearted! Forsooth, strange things happen in these days! Surely, when I chase thy hired spy nearly to thy palace—if it be yet standing—thou wilt require some explanation?"

The graven shaft shook in my hand with rage as I listened to her insulting speech, and Tirhak scowled black defiance at her taunts. Still I controlled myself, giving her another chance, though now the ships were close, and behind the beautiful speaker I saw familiar faces.

"'Tis not my wont, Listra," I retorted, "to brook flouts and sneers from any, least of all from the false lips of a child-slayer. But the Queen bade me pass in peace if it might be, so that each could go our way without strife. As for my comrade of the long-ship here, you will not despise his mettle when he turns at bay."

I could not have used worse words to calm a jealous woman's passion, and I might have known it, were not slowness of wit my greatest failing.

"Thy coward comrade I despise no less than thyself," hissed the Princess across the space that separated our keels, "and know that I spurn thy meek Queen's gracious intercession as the bereaved lioness would mock at the mercy of the hunter who had slain her lord and feared herself! No, spare yourself speech, who fear to fight because your gentle love is aboard!" she said, as the bulwarks of the vessels grated, and Tirhak, like ourselves, having pulled in his oars, rasped adown her leeward bow, "I will say my say before I strike, Macis, and it is this: Now that your dear one is within my grasp, and you are fleeing from the wreck of your land, the chance for which I have plotted and longed has come, and I shall not let it slip. Recall, my Macis, the words I spoke to you in the palace, when your Queen foolishly gave me life and liberty. Recall them—then ask of me if I pass in peace! You are in my power now, my false-faced warrior, and your mild-eyed Queen as well. Fight, then; and may a thousand demons drag your footsteps down to the darkest shadows!"

Then came the cry of war, the rattle of grappling chains, the clash of sword on sword, and a flood of men poured over our bulwarks ere we had time to draw in rank; and the strife began.

(To be continued.)

"AN AMERICAN EMPEROR."

JEROME K. VANSITTART, the richest man in the world, a product of American monopolies centring in a few families, and finally in a single individual, meets and falls in love with Mademoiselle Honorine de Montpensier, who similarly comprehends in her own person all the legitimist claims to the throne of France. He proposes to her and is rejected on the ground that she can marry no one but the Emperor of the French, as, although by the Salic Law a woman cannot ascend the throne of that country, she is compelled to preserve her right of inheritance.

A wild idea that he shall pit his brains and his money against the French Republic, takes complete possession of Vansittart, and he seriously plans out a campaign towards that end. He first consults his most trusted financial agent, Mr. Peter Studevant, and arranges for no less a sum than two hundred and fifty millions sterling to be at his control within the next eighteen months. He also arranges for a magnificent palace of wood, glass, and iron to be sectionally built in New York and shipped to Paris. As his scheme is principally to win the regard of Frenchmen of all classes by a huge and successful commercial and national undertaking, he secures the services of Mr. Walter C. Maclaren, a noted young American engineer. The latter, with an English and a French engineer, is dispatched on a secret mission to Northern Africa.

With Vansittart is staying his old friend, Dick Harland a light-hearted and straightforward but impecunious young Englishman. Vansittart takes him into his confidence, and half-jocularly appoints him his Master of the Horse. The millionaire picks up in Central Park a whole-souled and honest vagabond named James Bates, otherwise known as Arizona Jim, and after a queer *rencontre*, selects him to be the Captain of the Guard.

After some months of quiet thought and preparation Vansittart sails for Europe with the characters already mentioned; the Comtesse de Fontainbleau accompanies Mdlle. de Montpensier as her companion.

He wins the hearts of the Parisians by his lavish generosity and exhibition of sympathy with everything French. One day he is visited by M. de Tournon, Minister of the Interior, against whom he is warned by Honorine. Tournon and he set out for the levée at the American Embassy.

The above is a synopsis of that part of Mr. Louis Tracy's serial, "An American Emperor," which has already appeared in *PEARSON'S WEEKLY*, and will enable you to pick up the thread of the story at once. Naturally it is only a very, very bare outline.

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TO THE DEAF.

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A KISS.

I HAVE been vegetating, like a turnip, in this forsaken place for more than ten years now, and ten years hence I shall probably be still smouldering away here in unaltered circumstances, as far as human possibility can foresee; and yet be it understood I was, and still am, a very promising young man; all my friends, nay, even my enemies, agree that I might aspire to lofty and exalted positions in my native land. Alas! History repeats itself, and my undoing was brought about by a woman, and that woman was the Queen herself. This is how it befell:

I was ridiculously juvenile when my disgrace overtook me; let us say nineteen years of age. One afternoon, charmed by the softness and warmth of the early spring air, and pushed forward undoubtedly by unkind fate, I betook myself to the sheltered glades of the royal park, that I might muse undisturbed beneath the glorious linden-trees, whose branches met in gothic-like arches fifty feet above my head. I sauntered idly about, revelling dreamily in the soothing sights and sounds which gratified my senses on every side; the deep silence of the forest remained unbroken, save for the hum and whir of insect life, and the psalm-like sing-song of the quiet river which followed the avenue trod by an aimless foot.

I seated myself on a moss-covered log by the river where it widens into a miniature lake, and from whence a fine view of the palace arose in grey cloud-like splendour before me.

The dip of oars, languidly drawn through the water, aroused me from my day dream. I leant forward curiously, wondering who the intruders might be, when the sound ceased abruptly, and in the stillness a summer duck with purple throat and bronzed wings drifted by, calling gently to its mate; then the dip of oars sounded again, while in the gathering dusk I discerned the prow of a small boat rounding the curve, and hidden among the bushes I watched the occupants.

A young woman wielded the oars; she was in all the glory of early youth and beauty; slim and shapely she looked, as she pulled the little craft with easy strength through the placid water, her bare arms gleaming like satin in the waning light. Holding my breath, I studied her fine, proud features, the beautiful eyes, the delicate curve of the divine mouth. Filled with ecstasy and rapture, I wanted to fall on my knees and pray. It was the Queen of France.

I had loved her secretly for a year or more, and it was of her that I had come to dream in solitude through the long, soft hours of this spring afternoon, which seemed an emanation from her gracious person.

In the stern of the boat sat Her Majesty's pretty little nephew, Prince Louis, lightly holding the silken cords of the tiller. Absorbed in reverie, the Queen, with her small head thrown back and her swan-like throat exposed to my adoring gaze, continued to row in the golden light of the setting sun.

A sudden shrill cry rent the air, awakening me from my beatitude, and to my horror I saw the little Prince tip over the cranky boat and fall into the water, while the Queen caught at the branches of a tree and clung affrightedly thereto. In less time than it takes to tell I was swimming in the river after the child, whom I seized and brought to shore; then I turned the boat over and started to rescue the Queen. I took her lovely form (which had been made for Kings alone) into my arms, seated her in the craft, and rowed to land. She watched me with her marvellous wide-open eyes, in terrified silence, until at last feeling *terra firma* beneath her feet once more, she flew to her nephew, her boy who lay almost swooning upon the ground, and covered his little face with tender kisses.

Then turning to me she said with deep emotion: "You have saved his life, and I will give you in return anything which you may choose to ask of me."

"*Anything!*" I echoed hotly, while a thrill quivered through and through my frame and shook me from head to foot. Astonished at the suddenness of my reply, her eyes sought mine in wonder. I knew not what she read in their depth, but she blushed deeply and lowered her eyelids. As I have mentioned before, I was very young at the time, and although it may not behove me to say so, I was reckoned one of the handsomest youths at Court. The Queen knew me well, and had often smiled upon me when her eye, by chance, met mine fixed upon hers in speechless but most eloquent adoration.

As she hesitatingly lifted her glorious eyes to mine again, I saw a sudden flash of light pass through them which sent the hot blood tingling through my veins, and flinging discretion to the winds, I repeated: "*Anything!* Really? Does not your Majesty wish to recall her words?"

She made a negative movement of the head, while her colour deepened, and I, idiot that I was, madly enamoured of her beauty as well as of the glamour of royalty which hung about her like a perfume, begged in almost inaudible accents for "one kiss, only one."

"Your youth alone can excuse such presumption," she murmured reproachfully; but before the words were out of her mouth I had caught her beautiful head in my two hands and laid my lips on hers. In that wondrous second I felt the fresh delicious mouth tremble and return rather than repulse my caress; but I was quickly brought to my senses, as the Queen pushed me hastily aside and one of the Court Chamberlains advanced towards us from an adjacent by-path.

All this, and indeed it was little enough, reached the King's ears in due time, and the Queen was brought severely to book for her indiscretion. She unhesitatingly admitted the facts, I understand, but, ah me! did she ever confess that for one half second we were accomplices in that gentle kiss?

Being without fortune, and dependent on my Sovereign's bounty, it was but a span before I found myself just here, in this outlandish place, sent as secretary of legation. I am surely buried alive, unless it may please Heaven to gather my amiable master to a better world. There are moments in which I curse myself for a knave and a dolt, but toward Eastertide each year I receive from the royal palace a box of fresh and fragrant jonquils, and then rapture fills my soul, and I would not change places with the highest functionary in the land.

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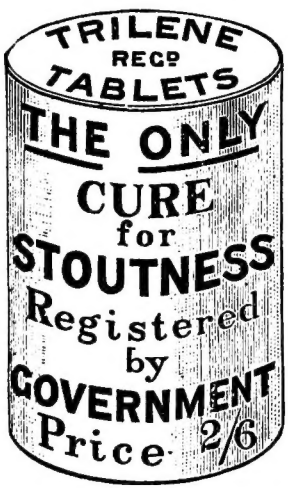

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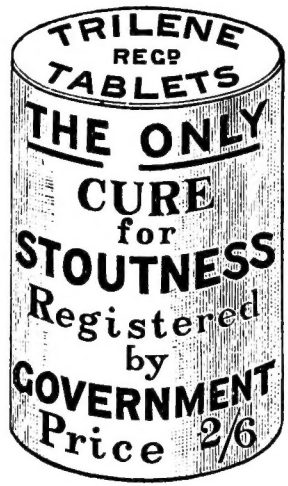

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Illustrated Family Novelist, November 30th, 1895, says: "A great many women who are plump by nature worry about their stoutness. However, there are some perfectly safe remedies for embonpoint, among them being the Trilene Tablets, which are not only safe, but absolutely beneficial to the general health, and speedily produce the desired effect."

MR. TAYLOR, Church Farm, St. James, Halesworth, says: "I have lost quite 2 stone since taking your Tablets."

"6, Brighton Terrace, Hull.

"MRS. JOHNSON has much pleasure in saying she has derived great benefit from your Tablets."

"3, Castle Road, Deal.

"MRS. J. PEARSON is glad to say she is much thinner."

Convalescent Home, New Brighton, Cheshire.

MISS S. J. PRITCHARD says: "They have done me good. I am 21lb. lighter already."

"Bretton West, near Wakefield.

"MISS L. LANGFIELD has taken a box of Tablets, and is already 7lb. lighter."

MRS. HUTCHINSON, 46, Irwell Street, Widnes, Lancashire, writes: "I have taken three boxes and am reduced a stone."

A. D. BILLINGS, Bell Inn, Aldershot, writes: "Have derived great benefit already. Less in size and weight, and breathing greatly improved."

25, Windsor Terrace, Penarth, Cardiff.

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Extract from *Bury and Suffolk Times*, June 15th, 1894: "Miss Atherton sings and dances as piquantly as ever, and is a marvel of agility, considering how much flesh she has put on of late. Her friends should induce her to take a course of Trilene Tablets, about which I hear wonderful things. One portly acquaintance of my own by merely a few weeks' use of these little Tablets, has reduced his bulk perceptibly. I am assured the Tablets are harmless and tasteless, and that the Trilene Company in Finsbury Pavement, London, are doing an enormous and ever-increasing trade."

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